

ANY TIME, ANY PLACE, ANY GENDER? THE RISKS AND REWARDS OF  
INTEGRATING FEMALES INTO SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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2 June 2015

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2 June 2015



## DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Currently, Major van Weezendonk has been selected to command the 38th Rescue Squadron, Moody AFB, Georgia. He is married with children.



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Last, to those who understand, no explanation is necessary...for those who don’t, no explanation is possible.

## ABSTRACT

In 2013, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff rescinded the long-standing restriction of women in combat. The Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) quickly accepted the removal of the ban, and tasked his special operations forces (SOF) organizations to examine standards of each of the selection schools. From the first US Public Law instituted in 1901 allowing women to serve in uniform, women provided a great service to the nation while filling an operational void. During periods of interwar, the legal authority was inconsistent with social acceptance and operational necessity. However, during periods of war, Congress quickly ratified amendments and adjustments to Public Law allowing women to serve their country in limited non-combat roles. In 1940, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), both paramilitary intelligence organizations, were created to counter the Nazi German threat in Europe and the Imperial Japanese threat in the Pacific. Both of these organizations employed women in daring missions behind enemy lines with successful outcomes. After the war, both organizations quickly disbanded, and others established to fill the roles. The special operations forces today still use the time-tested method of reverse selection engineered by the SOE and OSS during World War II. The missions of special operations forces are unique, high-risk, and have considerable political-fallout if they fail or are compromised, and therefore selection must remain incredibly rigorous. Military women are faced with options never before found in history of the US military. The physical hurdles still lie ahead of them, and when they successfully complete a SOF selection program, they will still have to face the hurdle of the cultural identity of organizations and the team subcultures. Women have a place in SOF, and like the SOF Truth suggesting that forces cannot be created after the emergencies arise, they can and should be created before the next conflict.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

*In 1943, a young Special Operations Executive (SOE) agent parachuted into German occupied France in the cover of darkness, and linked up with the French partisan network. This agent spent the next 8 months meticulously couriering messages, secretly surveying drop zones, sending encrypted messages, and coordinating the resupply of countless weapons and ammunition. When the Gestapo arrested the top agent in their cell, the young agent stepped up and single-handedly led approximately 3,500 Maquis against German forces. The agent had been in complete control of the Maquis since D-Day. Eventually, this partisan network killed over 1,000 Germans and captured upwards of 18,000 prisoners.<sup>1</sup> This special operator, a young woman known as Pearl Witherington, was indeed one of the first female special operators in World War II, and still considered one of the most successful agents of the SOE.*

Women have had a tremendous impact on the outcome of wars in both operational and support functions. Our military organizations have depended on their efforts and contributions throughout history when called upon by their nation to serve their country. However, in most conflicts the contributions American women has been limited to support roles outside of combat theaters. In January of 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey rescinded the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule (DCAR), calling on all Service Chiefs to open all combat occupations to women. This unprecedented rescinding of the DCAR, which restricted women from engaging in direct combat, potentially removed the final hurdle from women into entering all ground combat units. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has to provide a final report to

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<sup>1</sup> Binney, Marcus. *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Agents of the Special Operations Executive*, New York. NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2002, 199.

Congress by the end of 2015 on the recommendation of female integration into the special operations forces (SOF) from all Services. There are both rewards and risks for authorizing the integration of women into SOF. This thesis addresses the challenges and opportunities associated with using women in SOF.

Throughout major conflicts in history, special operations prosecuted by irregular and elite forces have had strategic and significant battlefield effects that have shaped the outcomes of conflict. Most recently, the United States' campaign in Afghanistan, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, has displayed a preferred shift in the use of SOF over conventional forces on the battlefield. The nature of warfare has never changed, but the character will always adapt to and be a reflection of the next enemy's strategies. The battles we fought yesterday will no longer be the same as the fight tomorrow. As we learn from the previous fourteen years of conflict, our SOF need to evolve in anticipation of tomorrow's fight. Women in the military in more recent conflicts have been attached recently to elite teams because they can interact with the women of the indigenous forces in many countries where the men cannot. This access gives the SOF team insight and valuable intelligence that men may never obtain alone.

Women have played a significant role in the defense of their nations throughout conflicts worldwide. To fill in huge labor gaps during World War II, the United States War Department enlisted women into many supporting roles allowing more men to take up arms on the front lines. US Public Law stood firm and Congress denied women the right to fight in direct combat units until 1994. Only then, did members of Congress lift certain restrictions for females by allowing them to fly combat aircraft and sail on combat ships. Congress continued the restriction of women from serving in Army and Marine Corps frontline ground combat units such as infantry, armor, and combat aviation positions. All of these restrictions changed, however, with the signing of

the DCAR on 24 January 2013. Women would now have the opportunity to assess into all career fields in the Department of Defense (DOD).

No one can deny the effect women have on the battlespace. From the first female fighter pilot in the 1990's, then-Captain Martha McSally piloting her A-10 and eventually commanding a fighter squadron, to the first three women earning their submarine "dolphins" on the USS Wyoming in 2012 as unrestricted line officers, women have proven they can manage the most technologically advanced weapons systems. However, the integration of women into a SOF team may prove to be more challenging. Selection for each different SOF specialty entails different physical, psychological, and moral requirements based on core capabilities of their respective Armed Service branch.

Chapter 2 of this thesis focuses on the discussion of the removal of the ban. Using historical backgrounds to frame Public Law and the operational need during periods of war, this chapter establishes how women in the services filled critical manning shortfalls, allowing more men to fight in the frontlines. It begins with the first Public Law in 1901 and concludes 112 years later with the rescinding of the DCAR.

Chapter 3 breaks down SOF selection program into four general phases: Phase 1-Application, Phase 2- Physical Selection, Phase 3- Basic and Advanced Skills, and, Phase 4- Final Training Exercise. This chapter shows how selection works and what the primary intent of selection provides the organization.

Chapter 4 defines the typical missions that SOF train for as their primary core function. The definition of special operations is divided into two types of special operations, that of surgical strike and special warfare. These two distinct mission sets are explored, revealing selection, training, and cultural differences between them.

Chapter 5 is the first of two case studies. It draws upon historical evidence from numerous sources to show how two organizations, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) of the United Kingdom, and the

Office of Strategic Services (OSS) of the United States, countered the German forces in occupied Europe employing women to their advantage. The birth of SOF selection programs comes from these two organizations and their examination provides insight to the processes still employed today.

Chapter 6 is the second case study of the employment of female special operators in Northern Ireland to counter the terrorist and criminal networks of the Irish Republican Army. These women trained as operators in the 14 Intelligence Company, an organization created as a result of the operational necessity of the conflict. The unit selected these women not only because they met the same grueling standards as the men did, but because the very fact they were women provided the team access to certain neighborhoods in Northern Ireland.

The final chapter will conclude the research paper by reviewing the pros and cons of the case studies, highlight a summary of the findings, and provide potential options for implementation. The implications of this study may indeed call for an organizational change of SOF, or a cultural change across the services for the specific standards of SOF.



## Chapter 2

### **Public Law and the Quest for Equality**

The decision of the Secretary of Defense in 2013 to rescind the restriction on women fighting in direct ground combat is one reflective of the American military's past performance over the past century. When called upon to serve their country, women have supported and fought alongside men as the laws afforded them the opportunity. During the periods between major conflicts such as the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts, our national leaders passed new laws based on the military's wartime performance. Significant to these changes was the downsizing of forces and budget slashing while trying to maintain a defensive posture capable of winning our nation's wars. New legislation ensured that the Department of Defense (DOD) possessed a force adequate in number and composition for current and future conflicts. The cumulative effect of these laws, as this chapter shows are greater opportunities for women to serve in roles historically reserved for males.

Some observers have labeled the DOD as an organization of American social experimentation.<sup>1</sup> If the DOD can implement equality and reward individuals on service records and meritocracy alone, then its policies should be a healthy reflection for the whole of the nation. Minorities, for example, integrated into the armed forces years before they had equal rights in American civil society. Nonetheless, the DOD was not always an equal opportunity employer or an advocate for women's rights until Secretary Panetta's decision.

Four distinguishable factors that determine social and legislative progression in our government are: legal authority, operational necessity,

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<sup>1</sup> Helena Carreiras and Gerhard Kümmel, "Off Limits: The Cults of the Body and Social Homogeneity as Discursive Weapons Targeting Gender Integration in the Military," in Helena Carreiras and Gerhard Kümmel, eds., *Women in the Military and in Armed Conflict* (Weisbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 31.



social acceptance, and political will, are variables that allowed women full access to combat and all roles in government in a little over a century. While each of these variables is significant and separate from one another, they are the driving factors that change laws. For example, operational necessity was a critical catalyst behind the adoption of the draft and Selective Service System, which opened opportunities for women to serve in uniform.<sup>2</sup> Civil society gradually accepted the idea of women in uniform after they had served in this capacity for some time. Social acceptance prompted the political will of members of Congress to enact laws granting women the permanent presence in the Armed Services. One method to view these variables is depicted below as cyclical in nature, beginning at the legal authority providing the foundation of law on what can and cannot be done (see Figure 1 below).

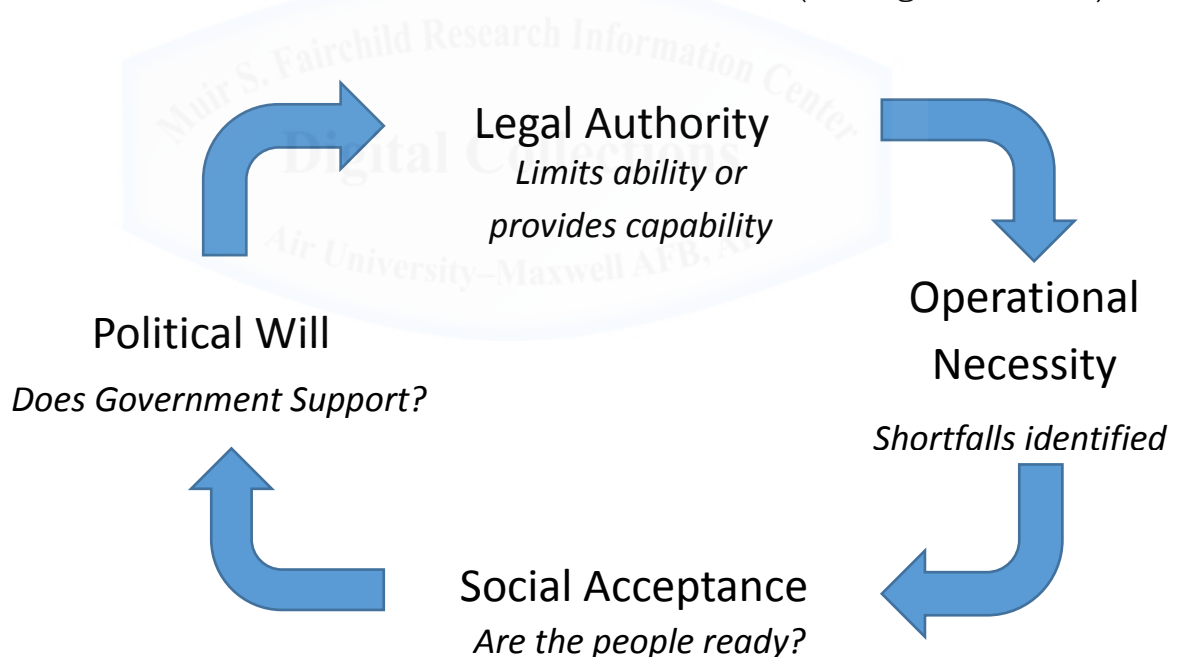


Figure 1. Progression and Equality Cycle.  
Source: Author's original work.

Operational necessity during war may highlight that existing laws are inadequate or outdated, and legislators can change them to overcome

<sup>2</sup> Selective Service Systems. <http://www.sss.gov/>

certain shortfalls. As a solution proves to work, society accepts the norm and then Congress (political will) decides that it is time to rework the legal authority, thus bringing the cycle into the next phase. The four variables together, through periods of conflict and the interwar periods, provided the foundation for women to integrate into direct ground combat roles.

The first factor is the legal authority. Equality for women has been a slow process indeed. For example, women could not even vote until the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the passage of many of the laws listed below, regulations in the military flat out omitted any mention of women in the service. Reflecting the prevailing social norm of the day, such documents simply implied and accepted that soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were all male. This social norm was not limited to the United States, as other countries employed women in their respective combat arms. The various Geneva Conventions (1864-1949) did not mention women in the armed service of a nation in its guidelines for the fair treatment of prisoners of war until ratified in 1949, four years after World War II. Prior to the 1949 ratification, the Conventions only mentioned the humane treatment of women and children (civilians)—non-combatants—during conflict.<sup>4</sup>

The second factor is the changing operational need that arises during major conflicts throughout history, driving social innovation and adaptive roles. During World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam, the operational need of each conflict drove the President and Congress to reintroduce the draft in order to meet the manning requirements of the Armed Services.<sup>5</sup> The duration and intensity of total wars in particular

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<sup>3</sup> US Constitution. 19th Amendment. <http://www.archives/historical-docs/>

<sup>4</sup> American Red Cross. *Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols*, <http://www.redcross.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Selective Service Systems. <http://www.sss.gov/>

drove the requirement to permit women entry into uniformed supporting roles for the Armed Services, freeing up manpower for the front lines.

The third factor is the social acceptance of women in the workforce. Women have made enormous strides in the last century in terms of equal rights for education, opportunity, and pay. The migration of women from the household to the factory in the 1940s during the Second World War highlights the demands for skilled and unskilled labor during periods of manning shortfalls during war. Women filled those labor positions admirably and without hesitation when the opportunity arose during the expansion of the American industrial war effort in 1942. After the crisis passed, the war finished, and men were demobilized and returned home, hundreds of thousands of women realized a new independence and refused to relinquish their positions to the returning soldiers. Cemented in this new generation of women was the normalization of society to accept that women have a place in the workforce, both in war and peace.

The fourth and last factor is the political will of our nation's leaders, both civilian and military, to make the right decisions in pursuit of our national interests. Under the Constitution, Congress has the authority to legislate the rules and regulations of the military.<sup>6</sup> For nearly three centuries, the Armed Services have restricted women from various types of military service, and until very recently, from serving in designated combat units. In both Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, women filled an operational need to provide security, drive in convoys, and perform Village Stabilization Operations (VSOs) in the area of operations (AOR). Hundreds of these women performed well when returning fire when exposed to enemy contact.

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<sup>6</sup> Congress has the authority "*To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.*" US Constitution, Article 1, Section 8, clause 14.

Politically, it was time for the government to lift all restrictions against women in combat.

To reiterate, the four variables of operational necessity, social acceptance, political will, and legal authority are cyclical in nature and applicable during the last 115 years of war and in time of the interwar periods. Each new conflict marked a milestone for women's equality, as operational necessity was the catalyst for their employment in the military. As women proved themselves in support of combat operations, it became socially acceptable for them to serve in uniform. Once women started breaking into the ranks of Congress and became lawmakers, the collective political will of the nation took notice of the female commodity in uniform.

### **1900-WWI**

Prior to 1901, the Statutes of the United States did not actually ban the employment of women in the War Department; it just completely omitted them in the legal language. Within a few decades, the United States Code (USC) evolved from the Statutes of the United States. USC Title 10 covers the use of the Armed Forces while USC Title 50 covers War and National Defense. Both of these codes mentioned men and servicemen, but never mentioned women or servicewomen.<sup>7</sup> Prior to the Twentieth Century, women had either worked in the Red Cross or disguised themselves in men's uniforms to fight. Legally, women first served in America's wars after the introduction of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, contained in Public Law 115-35.<sup>8</sup> The first woman to serve in Congress was Jeanette Rankin of Montana who took her seat in 1917.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> United States Commission on Civil Rights, *"Sex Bias in the US Code: A Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights,"* April 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Congressional Research Service, *"Women in Combat: Issues for Congress,"* 7-5700, David F. Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 1.

<sup>9</sup> United States House of Representatives. *History, Art, and Archives: Women in Congress.* <http://www.history.house.gov/Exhibition-and-Publications/WIC/Women-in-Congress>

She immediately began to highlight interest points and women's equality to the public eye. Women were under-represented in all forms of government positions. Although women provided support to the Army and Navy during World War I, their accomplishments were somewhat limited in scope. Their accomplishments were not a reflection of lack of capability but rather the brevity of US involvement at the end of that war.

## **World War II**

In World War II, however, the integration of women into selected specialties had some real impact over a longer duration of conflict. During the period of 1935 to 1954, there were thirty-six women elected into Congress. These women shaped the nation by transforming the role of women in the workforce and in the military.<sup>10</sup> There was a growing political movement behind the scenes, but more importantly, the operational necessity of putting men into combat roles left a support void that only women in uniform could fill. When the United States declared war on Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in 1941, the Armed Services authorized women to work as administrative assistants, support personnel, and in the medical professions.

One specific example illustrates how some of the factors discussed above contributed to women serving in uniform. In 1942, heavy combat losses posed an enormous manpower problem for the US Army Air Corps (USAAC).<sup>11</sup> The War Department directed the USAAC to expand in size and capability dramatically. For example, at the start of the war the USAAC only had 2,195 aircraft.<sup>12</sup> By 1943, senior USAAC leaders expected to field 85,898 aircraft for both the European and Pacific

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<sup>10</sup> US House of Representatives. *History, Art, and Archives*. <http://www.history.house.gov/>.

<sup>11</sup> National WASP World War II Museum. Hap Arnold Biography. 2008. <http://www.waspmuseum.org/hap-arnold-biography>.

<sup>12</sup> Overy, Richard J. *The Air War: 1939-1945*. Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, Inc. 2005, 21.

theaters.<sup>13</sup> The most urgent manpower shortage was in trained pilots, aircrew, and ground crew maintainers. In 1941 there were only 11,000 pilots trained in U flight schools, which dramatically increased to 82,700 pilots and 240,000 ground crew by 1943.<sup>14</sup> In addition to flying in frontline combat squadrons, candidates needed flying training, aircraft moved from factories to training bases, and some aircraft ferried from the continental United States to bases in England. In other words, operational necessity drove the USAAC to consider open its ranks to women in service.

To overcome the large void of pilots, the USAAC created a specific cadre of female pilots, the WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots). WASPs filled a number of important support roles for the USAAC. They test flew new aircraft to identify defects, instructed future pilot candidates, and flew mobility and ferrying missions bringing planes to final destinations overseas. Despite fulfilling a number of valued mission support roles, restrictions prohibited WASPs from flying in combat. By the end of 1943, recruitment of personnel was reduced by 33 percent as the military experienced a surplus of manpower.<sup>15</sup> In 1944, the WASPs demobilized as the USAAC no longer experienced a pilot shortage.<sup>16</sup>

The impact these women provided the nation and the USAAC was significant. Behind the scenes outside of military uniform, civilian women provided the foundation of the workforce in the military industry providing war ready materiel supporting two separate theaters, allowing more men to enter combat.<sup>17</sup> The Army's counterpart were the WACs (Women's Army Corps), and the Navy's WAVEs (Women Accepted for

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<sup>13</sup> Overy, *The Air War*. 2005, 150.

<sup>14</sup> Cate, J.L. and W.F. Craven, *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Vol. 6, Chicago, IL, 1948-1958), pp. 428-34.

<sup>15</sup> Overy, *The Air War*. 2005, 143.

<sup>16</sup> Frank, Lisa Tendrich. *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War: From the Home Front to the Battlefields*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC. 2013, 641.

<sup>17</sup> National Women's History Museum, "Partner's in Winning the War: American Women in World War II," NWHM 2007.

Volunteer Emergency Service). The War Department conceived the women's volunteer services as an operational necessity created by the circumstances of World War II, and their service would terminate with the end of the war. American society collectively during World War II in the United States was extremely patriotic, especially after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and women felt the need to defend and support their country as well. Socially acceptable to enlist in defending the nation, military women were looked upon favorably when supporting their nation in uniform. The political will of Congress supported the creation and organization of each of the volunteer women's forces through legal authorities.

The role of women in support of the Services during World War II laid the foundation for their future roles in the Services, and in society. Recognized by their skills and work ethic both society and the military accepted women filling some roles normally held by men. The operational need of men going to combat opened up the job vacancies for hundreds of thousands of women. Once women showed their capability in the military industrial complex, it became socially acceptable for women to leave the domestic household. Upon the conclusion of WWII, however, the nation's attention turned to re-establishing the domestic, political and economic order as the armed forces began a massive downsizing. This drove the expectation that military and civilian women in the workforce would leave their respective positions.<sup>18</sup> It was quite difficult for women who found a sense of independence to relinquish those jobs when hundreds of thousands of service members returned to the United States.

In February 1946, Chief of Staff General Dwight D. Eisenhower drafted legislation to establish a women's corps in both the reserve and

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<sup>18</sup> The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. The Women's Memorial On-line Collection, George Mason University. <http://www.chnm.gmu.edu/courses/rr/s1/cw/students/leann/archresreshistkwintact.htm>.



regular forces of a peacetime Army. Along with the Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, and the four Service Chiefs, they launched a massive campaign effort in 1947. It took three congressional sessions to get the final bill approved, and in 1948, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (Public Law 80-625) granted women a permanent presence in the armed forces.<sup>19</sup>

The Women's Armed Services Act was an attempt by the Services to satisfy the operational need of manpower voids created by sending off available men to the combat arms careerfields. Although granting women a presence in the DOD, this Act also established the Combat Exclusion Policy, excluding women from direct combat missions in different forms across all of the Armed Services. In the Navy, for example, women could serve on certain hospital and transport ships but barred from serving in combat aircraft and ships of the line. In the newly created US Air Force, women could fly support and training aircraft but not serve in combat roles. The US Army codified the restrictions on their WAC program during the war. As a result, there was no mention of separate regulations for women serving in the Army in Public Law 80-625.<sup>20</sup> All of the Services benefited from having women in the volunteer forces supporting an operational need, and the Women's Armed Services Act established the legal authority for women to serve.

### **Korean War Era**

The Korean Conflict began almost five years after World War II ended. During her formative years as the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt promoted that the US needed to provide women and minorities equal rights as US citizens. Socially unacceptable to have women in uniform and in the workforce, Roosevelt made it her lifetime duty to fight for

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<sup>19</sup> The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, George Mason University.

<sup>20</sup> GAO/NSIAD-99-7 Gender Issues, 1.



women's rights and for equality. As the nation prepared for war in the late 1930's, she championed women's employment in the defense industries, encouraged them to enter the military, and defended the women in the military service who wanted to do more than type, file, and clean.<sup>21</sup> She consistently urged her husband's Administration to hire more women to executive level appointments, a position she maintained over the next three consecutive Presidential Administrations (Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy). This strategic move of placing women in top authoritative positions added to the social acceptance of women in government, propelling the political will and legal authority to provide equality to both women and minorities. As President Roosevelt passed away during his third term, President Truman immediately appointed Eleanor as the United States Representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, a position in which she brought women's rights to the global spotlight. During the next Presidency, she insisted that President Kennedy needed to appoint even more women to his Administration, leading to her appointment as the first Chairwoman of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>22</sup> She maintained this posture towards the Administrations of both Truman and Kennedy, and continued to address women's issues with more concern and diligence.<sup>23</sup> The results of her persistence lead to more female lawmakers in Congress pushing for more equality among women and minorities.

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<sup>21</sup> The Eleanor Roosevelt's Papers Project. Eleanor Roosevelt and the Women's Movement. George Washington University.  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/lesson-plans/notes-er-and-womens-movement.com>.

<sup>22</sup> The Eleanor Roosevelt's Papers Project. Eleanor Roosevelt. GWU.  
<http://www.gwu.edu>.

<sup>23</sup> The Eleanor Roosevelt's Papers Project. Eleanor Roosevelt. GWU.  
<http://www.gwu.edu>.

## **Vietnam Era and the Feminist Movement**

During the 1960s and early 1970s, women began making more progress in gaining social equality within the US military. Eleanor Roosevelt provided the foundation for women's voices to be heard in the government and in the DOD. Along similar lines of the Civil Rights' Movement, the Equal Rights' Movement for women led to demand for equal opportunity in all fields, including national defense. During this era there was still little societal acceptance among many, including government organizations, for full integration and equal rights. The political will grew after numerous public protests and many atrocities, which lead Congress to imposing new legislature. These new laws provided both women and minorities with further opportunities. In 1967, an amendment to the 1948 Integration Act removed the limit of proportion of women in the military to 2 percent of the enlisted force and 10 percent of the officers.<sup>24</sup> These opportunities reflected a significant change legally in who could serve in uniform. The first step was the ending of military conscription, or the draft, in support of the Vietnam War (that was shortly ending).<sup>25</sup> In December 1973, President Richard Nixon signed into law the bill the ending of the draft. This bill, and subsequent debate on the professionalization of the US Armed Forces, ultimately led to the creation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) concept. The draft was the means by which the government could fill manpower requirements during periods of conflict. Given the small size of peacetime forces, the wartime draft permitted the Armed Services to fill vacancies and replace combat losses that can only be accomplished through involuntary means.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Women in Combat: Issues for Congress," 7-5700, David F. Burrelli, 13 December, 2012, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Selective Service Systems. *History and Records: The Vietnam Lotteries*. <http://www.sss.gov/lotter1.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Janowitz, Morris, and Charles C. Moskos, *Five Years of the All-Volunteer Force: 1973-1978*, Armed Forces and Society, V, February 1979: 171-218.

The AVF and the negative publicity of the Vietnam War marked a tremendous separation of manpower from the Services, and a decrease in available male recruits. The operational need to fill the ranks once again forced the Services to shift their attention to the recruitment of women. Among the issues that arose during discussions of the AVF was the possibility of women serving in more combat support roles. The DOD initiated a manpower assessment on the utility of women filling support positions by male draftees. The study concluded that up to 22 percent of combat support positions if filled by women would not result in a degradation to combat effectiveness.<sup>27</sup>

Other laws initiated by Congress attempted to fill recruitment voids for the DOD. In 1974, the age requirement for enlistment without parental consent became the same for men and women, prior to this law seventeen was the age for men and eighteen for women. In 1976, Public Law 94-106 opened up the Service Academies to women, in which the Army implemented a policy that essentially opened many previously closed occupations, including some aviation assignments. In 1977, however, the Army formally closed all combat positions to women. Later in 1978, Congress amended the 1948 Integration Act to allow women to serve on additional types of noncombat ships. The Navy and the Marine Corps subsequently assigned women to noncombat ships such as tenders, repair ships, medical, and salvage and rescue ships.<sup>28</sup> In sum, the shortage of male candidates led to the operational necessity of allowing women to serve in new combat support roles in greater numbers. The passing of the public laws and the amending of the 1948 Integration Act by Congress provided the legal authority for women to serve.

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<sup>27</sup> Skaine, Rosemarie. *Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. 1999, 59.

<sup>28</sup> CRS, "Women in Combat," Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 2.

## **Grenada**

The next conflict in which the United States took part occurred in 1983 during Operation URGENT FURY, the largest operation since the Vietnam Conflict. The massive assault on the Caribbean nation, relative to the threat it faced, was conducted by forces from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Special Missions Units, Marine amphibious landing, and Naval forces. Included in the rapid deployment were four US Army military police women who arrived shortly after the invasion. Once their presence was noticed, the leaders in command of URGENT FURY immediately shipped the women back to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>29</sup> There was no operational need to send the women into Grenada, much less legal authority to permit them to the exposure of direct combat with the enemy. Although over 200 women provided direct support to the successful invasion and withdrawal of US citizens from Grenada, the DOD did not credit them or considered the women as having been in combat.<sup>30</sup> Put simply, it was still not socially acceptable in the United States for women to engage in direct combat in the 1980's.

## **Post Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Risk Rule**

Even though women in combat were not socially acceptable in the 1980s, there were legal changes within the DOD. Following the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the DOD adopted a Department-wide policy called the Risk Rule in February of 1988.<sup>31</sup> The Goldwater-Nichols

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<sup>29</sup> CRS, "Women in Combat," Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, Barbara A. (USAF ret.) Operation URGENT FURY and Operation JUST CAUSE. 1996. <http://www.userpages.aug.com/capt/barb/panama/html>. Accessed on 9 March 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. 99<sup>th</sup> Congress. H.R. 3622, Public Law 99-433, 1 October 1986. [http://www.history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod\\_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReorgAct1986.pdf](http://www.history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReorgAct1986.pdf). The Act in itself was an attempt to reorganize the DOD with an emphasis in of strategy formulation, contingency planning, provide for more efficient use of defense resources, improve joint operations, and enhance the effectiveness of military operations. The Act did not include roles and responsibilities, and never mentioned the words "women" or "females."

Act reorganized the DOD to be efficient, but clearly did not define roles and responsibilities of how the forces would organize their combat arms. The DOD implemented the Risk Rule in an effort to standardize the services to exclude women from combat units or missions if the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater than the risk in the combat units they supported.<sup>32</sup> Each of the Armed Services set its own mission requirements subjectively and employed the Risk Rule to evaluate whether a noncombat position should be open or closed to women. Less than two years after the Risk Rule was adopted, women would soon deploy into the AOR (within the lethal radius of Iraq's SCUD missile range) to support the Gulf War, rendering the rule ineffective. In a time of operational necessity, the DOD cast the Risk Rule aside and deployed women alongside with their male counterparts.

### **DESERT STORM and the Feminist Movement during the Clinton Years**

The First Gulf War in 1990-91, consisting of Operations DESERT STORM and DESERT SHIELD, provided the pathway for extended legal authority to expose women to more opportunities in the military. Nearly 41,000 women deployed to various forward operating bases throughout the AOR in support of the war. A report filed by the Government Accounting Office in July of 1993, found that women endured the hardships of a lengthy and hostile deployment and performed their assigned tasks without impairment to the mission.<sup>33</sup> The operational need to keep units together during training and wartime necessitated the operational need to deploy women to the combat zone. As women proved

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<sup>32</sup> CRS, "Women in Combat," Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Government Accounting Office, "WOMEN IN THE MILITARY: Deployment in the Persian Gulf War," GAO/NSIAD-93-93, July 1993, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/b251354.pdf>.

their competence during the conflict, the unit cohesion displayed by the military and public display in the media garnered the social acceptance necessary for the political will to make changes to the roles of women in uniform.

Following the war, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1992 established a Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces to study the legal, military, and societal implications of amending the exclusionary laws. More than any other presidential administration since the feminist movement of the 1970s, the Clinton Administration successfully interjected feminist aims into the mainstream of American foreign policy.<sup>34</sup> On 28 April 1993, the Secretary of Defense directed the Armed Services to open more specialties and assignments to women, including those in combat aircraft and on as many noncombatant ships as existing law provided. Congress directed the Army and the Marine Corps to study the possibility of opening more assignments to women, but direct ground combat positions were to remain closed. The Secretary of Defense also established the Implementation Committee, with representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Armed Services, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to review the appropriateness of the Risk Rule. In November 1993, Congress repealed the naval combat ship exclusions and required DOD to notify Congress prior to opening additional combat positions to women.<sup>35</sup> The criteria for the social acceptance, the political will, and the legal authority for women to gain further access to combat roles were born out of the most successful military campaign ever launched in the history of warfare.

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<sup>34</sup> Garner, Karen. *Gender and Foreign Policy in the Clinton Administration*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press. 2013, 1.

<sup>35</sup> CRS, "Women in Combat," Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 4.



On 1 October 1994, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin rescinded the Risk Rule. In his view, the Rule was no longer appropriate based on the experiences women endured during Operation DESERT STORM. During this conflict, all US personnel in the theater of operations were at risk of attack. Ballistic missiles posed a particular threat to US forces. The most notorious incident occurred on 25 February 1991, when an Iraqi Scud missile struck a barracks in Saudi Arabia killing 28 US Army soldiers.<sup>36</sup> The Secretary also established a new DOD-wide direct ground combat assignment and definition rule (DCAR). The DCAR states:

Rule. Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignments to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground, as defined below.<sup>37</sup>

Definition. Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.<sup>38</sup>

The purpose of the DCAR was to expand opportunities for women in the services. Not only had the performance of women in Operation DESERT STORM validated their competence, women had the societal acceptance and the operational necessity to deploy. Women made up seven percent of all US Forces in the area of operations with nearly 41,000 of them deployed across all of the Armed Services.<sup>39</sup> In addition,

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<sup>36</sup> Kozaryn, Linda D. Scud Alert: After the Blast. DoD News. US Department of Defense. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id+45684>.

<sup>37</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense: Memorandum, *DIRECT GROUND COMBAT DEFINITION AND ASSIGNMENT RULE*, 13 January 1994, 1.

<sup>38</sup> OSD Memo, DCAR, 13 January 1994, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Skaine, Rosemarie. *Women at War*, 64.

no units or positions that were previously open to women may be closed. Secretary Aspin mandated that each of the Services had approximately four months to list all units and positions in the respective Military Occupational Series (MOS), Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC), and Navy Employment Codes (NEC) that were to remain closed even with this new policy in effect. The Services had to identify three criteria for each position. First, they had to show each job that was currently closed and proposed being opened to females. Second, they had to identify jobs that are to remain closed to women. Third, the Services had to provide a justification for why those positions should remain closed to women.<sup>40</sup>

Secretary Aspin subsequently established a process in which an Implementation Committee would review the proposed changes in policies and regulations. In his guidance to the Committee, Secretary Aspin identified four items as exceptions:

- 1) Where the Service Secretary attests that the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive;
- 2) Where the units and positions are doctrinally required to physically collate and remain with direct ground combat units that are closed to women;
- 3) Where units are engaged in long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions; and
- 4) Where job related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women service members.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> OSD Memo, DCAR, 13 January 1994, 2.

<sup>41</sup> OSD Memo, DCAR, 13 January 1994, 2. The first of four items that the Secretary can grant an exception to policy on is in with regards to SOF regularly working in confined areas with mix-gender teams and the cost of berthing and privacy arrangements would be prohibitive. Factors such as these are not to be considered when weighed against operational success of a mission. The last two items of long-range recon/SOF missions and physical requirements are of utmost importance in SOF missions. The physical and mental standards are what separate SOF from conventional forces. The exception to policy for all of these four items were rescinded with the "She is Ready Act," in



These four exceptions granted by Secretary Aspin maintained the capabilities and standards of certain units while keeping costs down. The first exemption directly countered the fiscal problem of integrating women into the Navy aboard their warships. The additional costs of adding female facilities in terms of berthing and latrines is estimated at \$5,000 for each female, per ship, and between \$200,000 and \$400,000 per female on submarines.<sup>42</sup> The second exemption concluded that although women could be in the area of operations such as Prince Sultan Air Base located in Saudi Arabia during Operation DESERT STORM, they could not be collocated with front line units such as intelligence or communications units supporting direct ground forces. The third exemption from Secretary Aspin was for SOF. SOF are direct ground combat units that are tasked with the highest priority and most politically sensitive missions. The last exemption was the physical capability of certain jobs in which an individual singularly had to perform a physical task that would disqualify the majority percentage of women. Opening up SOF career fields to women, it was thought, might gravely affect mission success or lower SOF standards, two critiques still heard today.

### **Post 9/11 - ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM**

In both Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), women played critical roles in combat support and combat service support roles. As the US Army transformed itself into a lighter and more mobile fighting organization, it highlighted the importance of the roles women performed in these units. The battlefield in which both wars fought was non-linear, and women were operating

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conjunction with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (Public Law 113-66; 127 Stat. 756).

<sup>42</sup> Stone, Andrea. Navy Says Subs Should Keep Hatches Closed to Women. *Navy Times* (27 September 1999), 14.

inside combat zones because the distinctions between forward and rear operating areas were blurred.<sup>43</sup> Army units had also significantly changed their organizational structure. Newly developed Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) deploy and fight differently, incorporated support BCTs alongside of the infantry and armor BCTs. The support BCTs employed large numbers of women in uniform, potentially exposing them to combat in Afghanistan and Iraq. The operational need for troops, regardless of gender, to operate heavy machinery and trucks as part of convoys made it socially acceptable within the military for them to deploy alongside their male counterparts.

Major Combat Operations terminated quickly in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Large-scale offensive maneuver was replaced in both with defensive security and stability operations. Both the US Army and the USMC (United States Marine Corps) employed women in their Cultural Support Teams (CST) and Female Engagement Teams (FET) with great success. The Army and Marine Corps created the CST and the FET because women could gain access to the female population in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Such women filled an important operational need and requirement by being able to interact and gain information from the female population in both countries.

The changing social acceptance of women in uniform was also demonstrated in the political will to modify how the Armed Services promoted women. In all of the Services, superior combat performance reflects greatly on the individuals' records, which weigh heavily when it comes to promotion selection. In 2009, Congress passed the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act as an attempt to diversify the senior leaders of the military. This Act established a Military Leadership Diversity Commission to conduct a study and issue a report on the establishment of fair promotion and command opportunities for both

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<sup>43</sup> CRS, "Women in Combat," Burrelli, 9 May 2013, 5.

ethnic- and gender-specific members for the ranks of O-5 and above in all of the Armed Services. A key recommendation from the Commission was that DOD should take deliberate actions to open additional career fields and units involved in direct ground combat to women.<sup>44</sup> The Act in itself was an attempt to give women “access” to combat, to prove themselves and therefore enabling their eligibility for promotion alongside their male counterparts. The DOD removed the barrier for women to fly in combat missions in all aviation components (except SOF air components) in 1994.<sup>45</sup> For the Service’s direct ground combat units and SOF components, this removal had few implications; these occupations still relied on combat action and leadership as the basis for promotion. The Commission had twelve months to report to the President of the United States and Congress the findings and recommendations on improving diversity.<sup>46</sup>

The Commission’s findings directly influenced the signing of the DCAR. When Secretary Panetta lifted the ban on women engaged in direct ground combat, he opened the doors to women having access to all military occupations, including special operations. Secretary Panetta’s staff reflected on the record of thousands of women who have served alongside their male counterparts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and analyzed the contribution of such women to the war effort when providing information to the Secretary that led to the DCAR.

As with any new laws and restrictions, the effects of the legislature may not be foreseen entirely. During his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee in July of 2013, Lieutenant General Robert E. Milstead Jr. pointed out that if the USMC involuntarily assigns both men

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<sup>44</sup> CRS, “*Women in Combat*,” Burrelli, 9 May 2013, iii.

<sup>45</sup> Department of Defense (DOD): Memorandum, *Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule*, 24 January 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2D Session. H.R. 5658, Calendar No. 758. 3 June 2008.  
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-110hr5658pcs/pdf/BILLS-110hr5658pcs.pdf>.

and women to positions that they are not capable of performing the required tasks, the unit's readiness will suffer.<sup>47</sup> The first example illustrates how enlisted Marines are placed into occupations that are short on manpower, and the enlisted do not necessarily get their first choice MOS, that female Marines could possibly find themselves involuntarily placed into rigorous combat arms assignments. The second example involves the legality of the Selective Service System. Currently, females currently do not have to register into the system, but for their male counterparts ages 18-25 it is compulsory to do so. On 4 April 2013, the National Coalition for Men filed a lawsuit challenging the legality that limits Selective Service only to men.<sup>48</sup>

In order to mitigate any possible negative effects into SOF, and based on the guidance received from Secretary Panetta, the commander of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Admiral William McRaven, quickly addressed the decision of eliminating the DCAR. In addition, Admiral McRaven welcomed the complete integration of women into all specialties within SOF from all Armed Services.<sup>49</sup> USSOCOM staffers quickly recognized the significance of the task Admiral McRaven had handed them. All SOF missions needed to be analyzed, with a particular focus on physical and mental standards, as well as the social-behavioral aspects of integration and the potential consequences of women on the effective functioning of small teams.<sup>50</sup> USSOCOM has conducted a comprehensive analysis of these missions

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<sup>47</sup> Hearing before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives: "Women in Service Review," H.A.S.C No. 113-50, 82-645, 24 July 2013, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Goode-Burgoyne, Shelly. *American Women and the Selective Service: It's Time*. 20 December 2014. <http://www.havokjournal.com/nation/american-women-selective-service-time/>.

<sup>49</sup> United States Special Operations Command: Memorandum, *US Special Operations Command Implementation Plan for Elimination of Direct Combat Assignment Rule*, 22 March 2013, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Hearing before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives: "Women in Service Review," H.A.S.C No. 113-50, 82-645, 24 July 2013, 53.

based on their doctrinal, organizational, training, material, leadership, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) implications. The Command's analysis has focused an enormous amount of emphasis on gender-neutral training standards for initial entry into SOF selection and qualification courses.<sup>51</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From 1901 to 2013, the four variables of legal authority, operational necessity, social acceptance, and political will have played out during periods of war and during the interwar periods. The DOD employed women during periods of limited manpower resources to fill operational voids, and as it became socially acceptable, our nation's policymakers drove new laws to establish equality and a permanent presence in the military.

Following major campaigns, Congress reduced the military's forces, and once again, the DOD recruited women fill the void. As women came to power in government, there was a greater role from the legislative branch to force the military into providing access to more occupations in the Services.

With the revocation of the DCAR in 2013, the four variables have again come full circle. Women have the legal authority to assess for the SOF teams, they have social acceptance from the public and backing from the military leadership, and the political actors are in favor of this move. More so than ever before, there is an operational necessity for women to belong on the SOF teams. The integration of the FET and CST later in the conflicts during stabilization operations proved invaluable to the SOF teams that employed them. The following chapter will define the

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<sup>51</sup> USSOCOM: Memo, *USSOCOM Implementation Plan for Elimination of DCAR*, 22 March 2013, 1.

typical missions that SOF execute regularly. Women can and should have a role in these missions.



## Chapter 3

### **Selection for Special Operations Forces and Their Organizations**

Chapter 2 provided the foundation of change for Public Law allowing women access to SOF. With the rescinding of the DCAR by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and General Martin Dempsey in 2013, women now have the legal authority to assess for the 7,200 positions that were once off-limits to them.<sup>1</sup> This chapter focuses on the SOF selection process and the organizational culture of SOF teams. In order for policy makers to realize the challenges of female integration into SOF, they must have a fundamental understanding of the selection process. The removal of the DCAR was not an attempt to increase the numbers of a critically manned occupation or to increase SOF capabilities; it was a move for gender equality.

USSOCOM needs to remain transparent with respect to each of its Service component's selection programs, and reinforce why the standards remain relatively high. Standards within selection remain high due to the nature of special operations, the missions operators conduct, and the stresses to which they are submitted, in addition to the operational environment in which SOF teams fight. This chapter reveals the origins of the selection process, how the process works, what selection accomplishes, and finally the attributes of candidates during selection for which the SOF community is looking. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how selection shapes the organizational culture of the SOF teams.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wong, Kristina. *Special Ops Forces Fear Standards will be Lowered for Women*. 6 April 2015. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/policy-strategy/237961-special-operations-forces-fear-standards-will-be-lowered-for-women>.

<sup>2</sup> The author has first-hand experience as an enlisted candidate, an operator, and as the commander for the USAF Pararescue/Combat Rescue Officer School from 2006-2009. The ideas in this section are based on personal experiences in Pararescue Selection, Combat Rescue Officer Selection, and in a Special Mission Unit Selection.



## **Part 1: The Birth of the Assessment and Selection Programs**

In 1941, General William Donovan stood up the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to perform unconventional activities in support of the war effort. With the assistance of Great Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), the OSS became the United States' first attempt to create a strategic intelligence organization.<sup>3</sup> The unconventional activities of the OSS during World War II included coordinating espionage activities, forming resistance groups, creating and disseminating propaganda, and conducting subversion in support of the Allied Armed Forces. In Chapter 5, the OSS selection process and the exploits of some of its women operators are described in detail. Not only do the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and USSOCOM claim the OSS as their parent organization, they continue to maintain the strict selection criteria initially established by the OSS for entrance standards into their respective organizations.<sup>4</sup>

During the war, the OSS recruited leading American psychiatrists and psychologists to develop a comprehensive method for selecting operators for employment into enemy occupied territory. The OSS championed this effort by drawing from the United Kingdom's SOE selection as a blueprint.<sup>5</sup> The candidates in the OSS numbered in the thousands, as the operational demand to create an intelligence organization from scratch to help defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan drove the requirements, which limited the amount of time the training and evaluation cadre had to assess them. Due to the added

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The author has had countless interactions with other SOF from all of the Services and foreign nations.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Strategic Services Society Homepage. The OSS Society, Inc. 2015. <http://www.ossociety.org>.

<sup>4</sup> White, Terry. *Swords of Lightning: Special Forces and the Changing Face of Warfare*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992, 29.

<sup>5</sup> MacPherson, Nelson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London: The Story of the OSS*. London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, 59.



pressures of large numbers of candidates and little time for assessment, the OSS adopted the SOE developed method of reverse selection that would seek to eliminate the majority of candidates based on established criteria.

The method of reverse selection that began nearly seven decades ago continues in SOF selection programs today with incredible effectiveness. In this method, first SOE and later the OSS assessed a prospective candidate according to seven major variables: motivation, energy and initiative, effective intelligence (intellect), emotional stability, social relations, leadership, and security (operational security). The OSS cadre also looked out for other qualifying characteristics in a candidate such as physical ability (strength and endurance), observation and reporting skills (reconnaissance), and the art of propaganda.<sup>6</sup> The result was the birth of the first selection process modeled on the approach of eliminating candidates deemed unfit for operating in foreign countries.<sup>7</sup> The assessment team used detailed methods of physical and mental tests to predict the success rate of future operators.

The goals of the assessment and selection process, in addition to eliminating unsuitable candidates early in the training process, were threefold. First, the process allowed the decrease in money expenditures on all potential candidates and maximized on those candidates deemed to be most successful. Second, the process limited the possibility of unsuitable operators from endangering the mission in occupied territory. Last, the amount gained by specially selected and qualified agents in service to the war effort is greater than the cost of the assessment program. The amount of money saved in terms of average expenditure of money and time computed included funds for housing, transportation,

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<sup>6</sup> Office of Strategic Services Assessment Staff. *Assessment of Men: Selection of Personnel for the Office of Strategic Services*. (New York, NY: Rinehart & Company, Inc. 1948), 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 1948, 9.

training, and dealing with an individual candidate who in the end proves unworthy of performing his assigned duties. The OSS team acknowledged the impossibility of calculating the harm prevented, but stressed that the potential damage to national security and the reputation of the organization is irrecoverable.<sup>8</sup> The cost to an organization to select, train, and equip its SOF operators to become fully mission capability can be expensive, and therefore it is important for the selection program to cull out the unsuitable candidates early in the process. Those candidates who made it through the rigorous physical portion of each program, defined as Phase Two in contemporary selection programs below, possess the proper motivation and potential to become successful SOF operators.

### **The Foundations of Selection and Assessment**

SOF missions and roles are unconventional in nature, placing unique demands on its operations, and therefore the Armed Service component organizations of USSOCOM (Army, Navy, and Air Force) place great emphasis on a demanding assessment and selection program.<sup>9</sup> The selection process is the very essence of what characterizes SOF as “special.”<sup>10</sup> While USSOCOM Service component organizations adapt to the current and future conflicts, their selection programs remain unchanged as SOF operate in the human domain and the core

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<sup>8</sup> OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 1948, 9.

<sup>9</sup> The Armed Service component organizations of USSOCOM responsible for selection and training include the Army Special Operations Command (Fort Bragg, NC), Naval Special Warfare Command (Little Creek, VA), and the Air Force Special Operations Command (Hurlburt Field, FL). Information on the different component commands, including the Marine Corps Special Operations Command, is available at <http://www.socom.mil/default.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> The answer to the question “what makes SOF special” is answered unsatisfactorily, through identification of characteristics and contrast with conventional forces, in The Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 16 July 2014), I-1-I-2.

requirements of the candidates remain constant.<sup>11</sup> SOF selection seeks and attempts to identify the desired attributes of an operator. These programs select characteristics of favorable traits of the candidates, as opposed to personalities. To search for characteristics, the Service component organizations employ a respective selection program to identify those candidates not desired in the organization, because they possess traits deemed unfitting to an organization or because they are incapable of acquiring necessary skills.

### **The Three Domains of Man**

There are many variables and attributes sought after during selection and a candidate must prove that he (or she) has the baseline foundation to be successful in his (or her) training. While SOF are said to operate in the human domain, this domain remains contentious and the subject of debate.<sup>12</sup> British theorist J.F.C Fuller offers from insights on how to analyze the human domain, when he suggested that the model of man could be broken down into three distinct human elements: the physical, mental, and the moral.<sup>13</sup> SOF selection is excessively rigorous in order to give the cadre an accurate look into each of the three domains of man. The three human elements complement each other and are the driving factors towards success in war. When separated, the three

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<sup>11</sup> US Army Special Operations Command, *ARSOF 2022: Part 1*, (Fort Bragg, NC: US Army Special Operations Command, April 2013), pp.16; 18-20.

<sup>12</sup> For statements in support of the human domain, see Claudette Roulo, "McRaven: Success in Human Domain Fundamental to Special Ops," *DoD News* (5 June 2013), available online at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120219>, accessed 9 May 2015 and Howard Altman, "Army's McMaster talks about the human domain of war at USF conference," *Tampa Tribune* (7 April 2015), available online at <http://tbo.com/list/military-news/armys-mcmaster-talks-about-the-human-domain-of-war-at-usf-conference-20150407/>, accessed 9 May 2015. An initial critique of the human domain is available at Ed Timperlake, "Getting the US Army's Future Right: Critiquing a TRADOC Perspective," *Second Line of Defense* (28 January 2014), available online at <http://www.sldinfo.com/getting-the-us-armys-future-right-critiquing-a-tradoc-perspective/>, accessed 9 May 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Fuller, J.F.C. *The Foundations of the Science of War*. London, UK: Hutchinson and Co., 1926, 55. Fuller uses the moral domain as in the will or willpower of an individual or an army.

elements limit the force available to win a war, but with the highest combination of them, they can win a war.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Physical Sphere**

The physical sphere of war invariably consists of the destruction of the enemy's physical strength to carry out war. Fuller provides three elements of the physical sphere: movement, weapons, and protection.<sup>15</sup> Selection replicates these three elements through basic and advanced skills training. The physical fitness program is the key distinguisher that sets itself apart from conventional schools and focuses on a candidate's physical elements. One of the primary goals of the physical training is to initially test the candidate to their maximum physical limits, and then gradually overwork them in order to breakdown their muscles to assess their physical resolve.<sup>16</sup> Constant physical exertion throughout SOF selection identifies many attributes of a candidate. All of the selection programs incorporate fast-paced runs and rigorous daily physical training sessions. The candidate's muscles do not rest throughout the duration of the program, and the intent of the selection process is for them to reach muscle failure every day. While some SOF programs stress the exposure of the candidates to the extremes of the environment(s), others reduce human comforts by denying appropriate caloric intake and sleep. Selection forces the candidates' bodies to adapt to this constant barrage of physical "punishment." The breakdown phase of the human body actually allows the brain to release natural endorphins to mask the muscular pain, and tap into the muscle cells

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<sup>14</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, 146.

<sup>15</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, 148-150.

<sup>16</sup> The human body is extremely resilient and the candidate's exhausted muscles can adapt to "punishing" workouts. Therefore, the cadre have a variety of exercises and physical batteries designed to keep the candidate's muscle groups guessing without allowing them to fully recover. The physical resolve is the candidate's ability to continue to physically perform, even though the candidate's muscles are sending indicators that it is time to rest.

themselves to burn as fuel during physical expenditure. The assessments of the moral and mental spheres begin once the candidates have reached physical exhaustion.

### **The Mental Sphere**

One of the basic philosophies of the United Kingdom's Special Air Service selection is the premise that under extreme physical and mental pressure, a man's true nature will emerge. The selection and training cadre will then look for the qualities of maturity, intelligence, self-reliance, endurance, and motivation.<sup>17</sup> Fuller equates the mental sphere of war to the brain and the nervous system controlling the body, much as the general and the staff control the army. His three elements of the mental sphere of war are imagination, will, and reason.<sup>18</sup> As the candidate's body has reached a state of physical breakdown, the mental sphere becomes increasingly important. By now, the physical portion of the candidate's body is performing as the mental sphere using the candidate's "will" as the motivating factor to continue. At this point, the cadre can recognize the intellectual abilities of each candidate by analyzing their thoughts, ideas, problem solving capabilities, by the decisions that the individuals make under stress. This is extremely important during the selection of SOF officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) due to their rank and respective status because they will assume influential positions on the teams when training is complete. The cadre will also be able to discern the "trainability" of a candidate when they are physically broken down and running on their mental reserve.

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<sup>17</sup> White, *Swords of Lightning*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, 93.

### **The Moral Sphere<sup>19</sup>**

Fuller equates the moral element of man as the domain of the soul, the will and the willpower of an individual.<sup>20</sup> In war, these equate to self-preservation, self-assertion, and self-sacrifice. He contends that the factors in the moral sphere build up emotions of fear, courage, and comradeship.<sup>21</sup> Selection processes place great value on these attributes. The physical breakdown of one's body can distort a candidate's moral sphere and instill fear. For example, a physically replenished candidate attempting to complete an obstacle course thirty feet above the ground is significantly different from attempting the same obstacle when the candidate is physically exhausted. Through the building of teamwork and the strict reliance on self-sacrifice for the safety of his team, the candidate is instilled with fear that he cannot let his team down. Likewise, the team's performance imbues the individuals with confidence that the team will perform its assigned duties and succeed. Of all of the moral elements involved in war and in the individual, the fear of failure is the greatest emotion an operator can experience. As a result, potential SOF operators motivate themselves during selection and training to instill confidence into the moral and mental sphere. The team wins together and the team loses together. It is quite noticeable to all SOF selection cadre members when a candidate is "in it for himself" trying to become an operator, for reasons of pride and ego, rather than for the SOF unit team. SOF place great emphasis on the "team-before-self" belief and cadre eliminate candidates who do not embody these values.

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<sup>19</sup> It is important for the contemporary reader to realize that Fuller is referring to moral in the sense of will, and not ethics. When reading though Fuller's ideas, it can be helpful to think of moral as morale instead.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, 116.

<sup>21</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, 121.

## **Scope of Selection**

Within the scope of SOF, the SOF recruiters, operators, and the respective SOF organization have a mold for, and a vision of, whom they are selecting. All SOF selections are voluntary and candidates may choose to self-eliminate at any time, commonly called “return to unit” or RTU. Although each of the armed services bring different capabilities to the joint fight, based on their unique domains and operating environment, yet all share similar baseline selection criteria for their special operators as subsequent sections make clear. When Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey rescinded the DCAR, they charged USSOCOM and the individual Armed Services to review the selection standards of each program and to justify them.

## **SOF Truths**

Almost all special operators can repeat the five “SOF Truths.” These Truths are more than just an organizational and cultural credo, to foster a sense of identity. USSOCOM published the SOF Truths almost 30 years ago in an attempt to outline timeless principles of what composes SOF and what makes them unique.<sup>22</sup> The five SOF Truths are: 1) Humans are more important than hardware, 2) Quality is better than quantity, 3) SOF cannot be mass-produced, 4) Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur, and 5) Most special operations require non-SOF support.<sup>23</sup> The emphasis in four of the five SOF Truths on the value of SOF operators reflects the requirement for a rigorous, voluntary selection process that eliminates, on average, between 65-85

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<sup>22</sup> United States House of Representatives. *United States and Soviet Special Operations: Special Operations Panel*. 28 April 1987. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039055655;view=1up;seq=1>, V. Colonel John Collins wrote the “Five SOF Truths,” which first appeared in a House Armed Services Committee print entitled *United States and Soviet Special Operations*, 28 April 1987.

<sup>23</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. <http://www.soc.mil.swcs>.



percent of its potential candidates.<sup>24</sup> Many SOF units have the capability (and luxury) of selecting their support elements. Often times, senior leaders of SOF units seek out support personnel with similar characteristics to those they hold most important in their SOF operators.<sup>25</sup>

### **SOF Selection**

The typical SOF missions are difficult and Chapter 4 goes into a detailed discussion of them. Because of their difficulty, these missions require unique skills and capabilities in order to complete them successfully. SOF missions are beyond the scope of conventional forces because of the unique and specialized skills involved for access, the operational environment, and the risks they involve.<sup>26</sup> Such risks are political in nature and at a high cost to the nation if the mission does not succeed, and often involve great personal risk to the operators. The failure to rescue American hostages held in Iran in 1980, for example, haunted American policy makers and the public for almost a decade. SOF missions expose the operator to an environment of extremes in which the enemy feels is of low threat to themselves—precisely because of those extremes. Selection, therefore, trains to those mission extremes and almost equates to punishment for the candidates. Although the aim is to train and operate in all environments, each Service SOF team has a

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<sup>24</sup> No other military organizations or careerfields would ever allow such a high rate of failure to exist in the Department of Defense, except for SOF. According to United States Army Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade Homepage, 24 December 2014. there are varying elimination and recycled rates of trainees at different stages. <http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/rtb/>. All of the SOF programs have varying percentages of attrition, and through numerous sources it is cited between 65-85 percent attrition.

<sup>25</sup> In the SOF world, SOF are the personnel in uniform who work in the special operations environment, but when peeling it back further, support personnel are not “operators.” In the SOF community, operators are forces that directly engage the enemy in training, advising, equipping, or combat with specialized skills and tactics.

<sup>26</sup> Last, David and Bernd Horn, *Choice of Force: Special Operations for Canada*. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005, 272.

particular niche or environment in which they operate most effectively (e.g. SEALs in maritime operations, Air Commandos in the air, etc.).

## **Part 2: The Phases of Selection**

### **Phase One – Administrative Criteria**

Phase One of selection is comprised of the initial screening evaluation. Each service has strict standards that cannot be waived. Minimum ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude and Battery) test scores highlight a candidate's baseline aptitude for learning a trade in their respective Service.<sup>27</sup> The required ASVAB for SOF are considerably higher than for conventional careerfields due to the advanced skills and the extensive and complex nature of special operations equipment. The candidates enter a barrage of health physicals to make sure they meet the requirements for eyesight, hearing, and other medical limits necessary for flying, jumping, and diving duties. Phase One of selection also entails the process of gathering the volunteers to enter a certain program for a scheduled class.<sup>28</sup> This process can be done during recruitment before entering the Service (through the candidate's recruiter and through MEPS—Military Entrance Processing Station), during Basic Training, and during one's career as an experienced service member volunteering to cross-train into SOF.

Once a prospective candidate volunteers, they are subjected to a simple physical assessment test. The minimum scores for this initial test are comparable to the annual Services' physical fitness test in order for the program to enroll a large pool of potential candidates. Officers and prior-Service members cross training into one of the SOF branches have a different standard subject to higher scores, psychological batteries, and

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<sup>27</sup> Military.com, The ASVAB- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. <http://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/asvab/>.

<sup>28</sup> All of the selection programs for SOF: SEALs, Rangers, Special Forces, Force RECON (MSOT), CCT, PJ, TACP, and SOWT are volunteer forces. Candidates can quit at any time.

a personnel package including prior-Service reports. This information is required because the Phase One selection criteria for officers and NCOs are considerably different in some Services, as they will immediately fill leadership positions upon graduation.

Typically, Phase One eliminates some initial prospects based on ASVAB scores and other entrance requirements, or for medical reasons or poor physical assessment scores. The minimum standards for entrance into SOF are the lowest possible scores deemed necessary for an individual to enter selection. Over the course of SOF selection, the minimum standards have changed and adjusted to reflect the needs of the Services based on analysis from historical data. For example, the US Air Force Pararescue selection program reduced the minimum entrance standard on the run to 10 minutes and 30 seconds, down from 11 minutes and 15 seconds. The new standard captured data analyzed over a decade indicating that less than one percent of candidates who could not run faster than the new minimum time would pass.<sup>29</sup> Some SOF operators who met only the minimum physical entrance standards are now quite successful because the process of reverse selection identified their potential.

### **Phase Two – Rigorous Physical Training and Team Building**

Once the initial class roster is established, the candidates enter Phase Two of selection, the physical selection program. The process of SOF selection is actually reverse to ordinary programs. While conventional programs promote exceptional performance, SOF cadre attempt to eliminate sub-par performance. While the standards become increasingly higher as SOF selection proceeds, it is easier to eliminate the masses than it is to identify a few top performers. The psychologists

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<sup>29</sup> Baumgartner, Dr. Neal, HAF Physiologist. Interviewed by author, December 12, 2014.

on the SOF training cadre, who have witnessed the selection process for years, still do not understand the combination of physical, moral, and mental fortitude that will drive a candidate to be successful. Each of the Services runs their own selection process with seasoned operators who are on a controlled tour for that very reason. The selection programs tend to recruit young NCOs as cadre who are fresh off a deployment where their skills and physical capabilities are relevant to today's fight. As Anna Simons points out in *The Company They Keep* (a cultural anthropologist's analysis into Special Forces' culture), there is one incentive to be tough and demanding on the candidates: the cadre's life and the lives of his teammates depend on how well he screens the candidates.<sup>30</sup>

Historically 65-85 percent of candidates will not make it through this phase of SOF selection. The majority of those who do not pass through this phase of SOF selection leave voluntarily, receive an injury and cannot progress, or have a mental inability to cope with the punishing regime—they simply decide to quit.<sup>31</sup> The investment of resources and time into the candidate at this point is considerably high, and those with injuries may be recycled into a subsequent selection class depending on the severity and nature of the injury. Some tenacious candidates display the mental fortitude and will never self-eliminate. These candidates face elimination for failure to meet standards and can possibly reenter selection in another class. The purpose of Phase Two is to quickly trim the number of candidates and establish a core group on whom to focus training.

A central idea behind this phase of selection is to get those candidates who are physically incapable of performing and those whose motivation is questionable, to quit early. The desire of the cadre is for

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<sup>30</sup> Simons, Anna. *The Company They Keep*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996, 59.

<sup>31</sup> White, *Swords of Lightning*, 27.

each of the candidates to search deep down beyond the physical capabilities that each possesses and to find that motivation. Phase Two's main intent is to physically breakdown the human body through extreme physical demands and exertion. Selection is 10 percent physical and 90 percent mental and moral will.<sup>32</sup> Each day is a continual physical and mental assessment of strength and mental and moral will. Every week the minimum physical standards increase so cadre can evaluate the candidates; they are continually pushed to improve their strength, endurance, and their resolve. The candidate's muscles succumb daily to muscle fatigue and muscle failure with little time to rest in between assessments. Some programs allow candidates more time to eat and sleep in order to reinvigorate their health, while other programs, such as Ranger School, deprive the soldier of both food and sleep while maintaining rigorous physical training.<sup>33</sup>

This phase of selection identifies the motivation of each candidate, their ability to overcome extreme physical duress, and their mental and moral resolve to persevere. As a candidate completes Phase Two and moves on to Phase Three, he (or she) has proven himself (or herself) physically and mentally capable of completing the remainder of the program.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The author has completed USAF Pararescue/Combat Control Indoctrination, numerous advanced skills programs. The selection programs of all of the services are extremely physically oriented, and candidates are reminded daily that the physical portion amounts to only 10% of the exertion.

<sup>33</sup> United States Army Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade Homepage. 24 December 2014. <http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/rtb/>.

<sup>34</sup> Although not a guarantee to complete all necessary training, the core physical strength and endurance built in Phase Two of selection places the candidates in a position of success to physically complete their respective SOF programs. Advanced skills such as combat diving, military freefall, demolitions training, and medical programs have rigorous academic standards as well. This is another part of SOF training that Phase Two cannot fully assess, and therefore the Services have a minimum ASVAB score in place to determine academic trainability of the candidates.

### **Phase Three – Basic Skills**

After successfully passing the physical selection (at no time do the physical standards cease or decrease), the candidates will move on to Phase Three. The physical selection provides the cadre with the confidence that the candidates possess the physical, mental, and moral traits necessary to be successful in Phase Three. In Phase Three, the bonds between the training cadre, or instructors, and candidates begin to form. The instructors know those who have passed the physical portion of the program have the proper motivation to continue in training. Phase Three consists of, but is not limited to, the following: small team tactics, land navigation, land and/or maritime reconnaissance, combat dive, survival, basic airborne, military freefall, basic helicopter insertion and extraction methods, demolitions, mountaineering, medical training, and combat arms instruction. These skills are foundational, meaning that they lay the groundwork for a developing operator to be able to conduct his assigned mission in a variety of environments. Standards initially start low into the assessment and rapidly increase as the introduction of more skills and the level of risk associated with them rises.

Each of the Services has their core tasks of warfighting, and the candidates must show that they have the foundational skills required to proceed in training. While the candidate's safety is a concern to instructors during the physical selection of Phase Two, such concerns significantly increase during Phase Three. Instructors expect a candidate's behavior and performance to mature as they acquire advanced skills during training. Failure to conduct safe operations equals punishment, in terms of additional physical exercises, or elimination if the candidate repeatedly fails to observe the safety standards of the course. Phase Three baselines and refines a future operator's skills before moving on to Phase Four.

### **Phase Four – Culminating Exercise**

Phase Four is the culminating exercise from each of the selection programs. Each SOF selection program has their unique culminating exercise designed for the candidates to demonstrate that they have obtained the mastery of their core skills. For example, the culminating exercise for Army Special Forces is the month-long “Robin Sage” exercise in the fictional country of “Pineland.”<sup>35</sup> Candidates who make it to Phase Four must perform their assigned tasks and missions to certain standards, as they possess all of the necessary skills to be successful. Candidates have been recycled or dropped from the program for failure to complete the exercise or for displaying serious lapse in judgment during them. This phase of selection is the last time the training cadre may remove the candidate from the course or provide him (or her) feedback before he (or she) becomes an operator. Upon successful completion of the exercise, the candidates will enter the ranks of their respective SOF units. After the newly designated operator graduates the program, he (or she) must continue to prove himself (or herself) at his next unit during a probationary period before he (or she) can deploy. In some SOF programs, this may take six to eighteen more months of equipment upgrades and advanced skills training.

### **Part 3: Organizational Culture of SOF Begins at Selection**

The SOF cadre select candidates based on selection tests of their physical, mental, and moral capabilities, in part to find the right operators but also in an effort to maintain the organization’s cultural identity. The reverse selection process mentioned in the section on the

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<sup>35</sup> Details of Robin Sage, including articles and videos, are available on the “Robin Sage” section of the “Special Forces Training” website. Available online at <http://www.specialforcestraining.info/robinsage.htm>, accessed 10 May 2015. For more specific details, including the geographic setting and country names, see Fred Pushies, *US Army Special Forces* (St. Paul, MN: Motorbooks, 2001), 83-88.



foundations of the OSS means that SOF programs can select members out rather than in. In *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, Harrison Trice describes the rites of passage and the three rites that apply to individuals before their acceptance into an occupational life.<sup>36</sup>

The first rite Trice identifies is that of *separation*. This rite detaches people, physically and symbolically from their former roles. Not only was this accomplished by the Services when the recruit went to basic training and was stripped of his/her civilian identity, it happens again during SOF selection. SOF selection strips the candidates of their conventional mindset of rules, regulations, processes, and identities. The second rite is of *transition*. This rite equates to the “between” phase of selection, Phases Two and Three. At this time, the candidate is neither a conventional soldier (or sailor, Marine, or airman) nor SOF. Their former status and roles gradually vanish, but they have yet to share any new experiences with their futures teams. The final role is the rites of *incorporation*. Incorporation is demonstrated by the completion of Phase Four, the graduation ceremony, or the traditions established by the organization when an operator is assigned to that unit. The rites of incorporation begin the socialization and acceptance of the newest member on the team.<sup>37</sup>

An important aspect of Phases Two and Three is the cultural identity developed during the physical and skills training during selection. The rigorous physical process, while engineered to breakdown the candidate’s physical abilities, actually builds and develops a culture among the team. Culture is learned. Cadre transmit culture vertically to the candidates, and culture is also transmitted horizontally from other candidates in senior classes.<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Turnley, a cultural

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<sup>36</sup> Trice, Harrison, M. *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1993, 118.

<sup>37</sup> Trice. *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, 118.

<sup>38</sup> Most selection courses can multiple classes going through at different phases. A key example of the horizontal transmission of culture can be understood as the junior

anthropologist affiliated with the Joint Special Operations University, points out that it is critical to understand the sense-making strategies of communities, groups, social networks, and other forms of social collectivities if we are serious about influencing attitudes and changing perceptions.<sup>39</sup> During selection, there will be physical barriers for female SOF candidates to face, as well as social and cultural barriers. A change to the physical standards in SOF selection can be implemented allowing women access, but the social costs could be severe.

The culture of an organization is generational, and the therefore the process takes a much longer time to establish and change. If the reduction of physical standards occurs, the social and cultural barriers for the acceptance of female SOF candidates will be extraordinarily high. A number of SOF operators have already publically expressed their concern that standards within their specific organization are at risk of being lowered in order to admit women.<sup>40</sup> During the first ever integration of females into the coveted US Army Ranger School, the program has not altered its strict standards in any way for this class. The women have to meet the same physical, mental, and peer (review) standards that the men have.<sup>41</sup> The route that the Ranger Training Battalion established, by maintaining its rigorous standards, is an example of keeping the culture of the organization intact. The successful

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teams in selection look at and emulate the senior teams. The senior teams usually pass valuable information of expectations from the cadre, or what is expected in future phases of training. Recycled candidates from senior teams are valuable assets to a junior team, as they provide a wealth of knowledge, skills expertise to their new team.

<sup>39</sup> Turnley, Jessica, *Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are*. Joint Special Operations University, Report 11-1, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, The JSOU Press, 2011, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Wong, Kristina. "Special Ops Forces Fear Standards will be Lowered for Women." *The Hill*. 6 April 2015. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/policy-strategy/237961-special-operations-forces-fear-standards-will-be-lowered-for-women>.

<sup>41</sup> Williams, Chuck. "Peer Review next Obstacle for First Women to Undergo Army Ranger School." *Ledger-Enquirer*. 2 May 2015. <http://mcclatchydc.com/2015/05/02/265368/peer-review-next-obstacle-for.html>. The first ever female-integrated Ranger School started on 21 April, 2015, with 399 total soldiers (19 of them women). After four days of grueling physical assessments, 192 soldiers remain with 8 women.

women candidates in the current course are not only expected to meet the standards of the organization, but will also conform to the culture of the Rangers.

Once a new operator arrives to a team, he (or she) has to incorporate into the new culture of that organization. Even units and teams within the same Service have different cultures based purely on geographical locations of those organizations, for example “East Coast” versus “West Coast” SEAL teams and regionally-oriented Special Forces Groups (the SOUTHCOM-oriented 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group versus the self-described “Fifth Legion”—the CENTCOM-oriented 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group). No one understands the culture of an organization more than those who live it. Cultural anthropologists may study an organization for many months and attempt to categorize the culture in a certain way from their perspective. Their unintentional biases linger in place because of the anthropologist’s education or their experiences which shape preferences and biases. Their perspective is skewed because they have not had the shared experiences of what selection means to the operator, and their perception of the culture would change if they had endured the physical rigors of training.

Cultures cannot be produced by individuals alone, but originate as individuals interact with one another.<sup>42</sup> All SOF teams have developed their own cultures, and even among units, subcultures develop within an organization. For example, within Air Force Special Operations Command, pararescue jumpers (PJs) have different cultural norms and artifacts from combat controllers. Within the combat control teams (CCTs) there are significantly different rituals and totems between the different Special Tactics Groups and Squadrons. These subcultures even develop lower among platoons, teams, and elements within a Squadron. Groups defined by demographic characteristics of age, sex, and ethnicity

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<sup>42</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, 21.

also have a high potential for developing significant subcultures of their own, for example between so-called “baby boomers” (those born between 1946 and 1964) and “millennials” (those born between 1980 and 2000).<sup>43</sup> Demography influences culture and sub-culture on SOF teams as well. The vast majority of SOF operators are predominantly Caucasian males, from specific regions within the US, which has an impact on unit cultures.<sup>44</sup>

This demographic of predominantly Caucasian males solidifies a culture, but perhaps leads to issues in problem solving and course of action development due to “groupthink.” Groupthink occurs when a homogenous, highly cohesive group is so concerned with maintaining unanimity that they fail to evaluate all their alternatives and options. Groupthink members see themselves as part of an in-group working against an out-group opposed to their goals.<sup>45</sup> The addition of female SOF could possibly erode groupthink during mission planning scenarios, which works to the benefit of the team.

Cultures are dynamic and can shift over time.<sup>46</sup> Some commentators and observers, for example, have expressed concern that SOF core skills, as well as unit culture, has changed as a result of more than a decade of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The collective SOF direct action or raiding skills are possibly the sharpest they have ever been. Other core competencies central to unit identity, and therefore culture, have eroded. One example has been a de-emphasis on unconventional warfare skills within the Army Special Forces

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<sup>43</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, xii.

<sup>44</sup> A point made dramatically in the movie “Black Hawk Down.” For more, see Deane-Peter Baker, *Just Warriors, Inc.: The Ethics of Privatized Force* (London: Continuum, 2011), 165.

<sup>45</sup> Janis, Irving Lester. *Victims of Groupthink*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972. <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/theory/grpthink.html>. Accessed on 12 May 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, 23.

community, which has prompted efforts within the US Army Special Operations Command to refocus on “special warfare.”<sup>47</sup>

Other SOF organizations are concerned about the impact of sustained combat on their core skills and culture. In testimony before Congress, for example, Roger D. Carstens emphasized that US Navy SEALs were heavily involved in the ground fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. This involvement is significant, as the SEALs have shifted from their primary role as USSOCOM’s maritime SOF component of choice, and refocused their efforts in OIF and OEF to ground combat operations. Within SEAL units and command, this refocus has created a resultant organizational shift in philosophy, tactics, and resource investments. Nowhere is this better showcased than in Ramadi, Iraq, where the SEALs established a Task Unit that broke new ground in building relationships with conventional Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), training and employing host nation army forces (conducting FID), and using counterinsurgency tactics to kill insurgents.<sup>48</sup> New recruits and young operators only know about SEAL teams, and their heritage and culture, from their experiences in the Middle East and Southwest Asia from their deployments. In addition, the young NCOs who have three or more deployments under their belt, who carry SEAL traditions and return to the selection programs as cadre, in turn change the processes and requirements for future SEAL operators and affect the culture.

Cultures are also intrinsically symbolic. A person just has to mention SEAL, Special Forces, Ranger, Force Recon, or Special Tactics

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<sup>47</sup> Works pointing out this de-emphasis include David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia, 2007) and Hy Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006). The refocus on “special warfare” within US Army Special Operations Command is evident in the recent publication *ARSOF 2022: Part 1*, (Fort Bragg, NC: US Army Special Operations Command, April 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Carstens, Roger D. “Special Operations Forces: Challenges and Opportunities,” Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee’s Subcommittee on Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Center for a New American Security, 3 March, 2009.

and the majority of the public understands who these men are and some of their capabilities. In a general sense, the culture within the SOF community writ large is extremely resilient and protective of its status, and preserves the differences between it and the conventional forces. Another symbolic SOF cultural aspect is the degree of competition and healthy rivalry between and within different SOF units.<sup>49</sup> To gain acceptance into the SOF subculture, the new operator must display great skills in exercises and during deployments with his team. He (or she) must prove himself (or herself) by performance in combat and operating at full capability each time.<sup>50</sup>

Senior NCOs and the NCOs generate the culture on SOF teams as they spend the majority of their careers there. Officers will spend brief periods in their careers assigned to the teams and are then reassigned to professional military education, career broadening, and staff tours. Although such officers bring their SOF identity with them, they nevertheless leave the culture behind. Officers in SOF become “chameleon-like;” deftly skilled in the transition of identity between their SOF organizations and the conventional identity of their respective Service as they broaden their career between the two.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 begins with the SOF selection process derived from the origins of the Special Operations Executive and the Office of the Strategic Services during World War II. Both of these organizations had formulated a process that still endures almost seven decades later. The

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<sup>49</sup> Satire sometimes contains a raw kernel of truth. For example, a spate of movies about or featuring Navy SEALs has led to a number of jokes or spoofs. One satire highlights the competition between SOF units: “Seal Team 6 Calls ‘Zero Dark Thirty’ Inaccurate; Say They Don’t Pop Collars Or Wear Tapout Gear,” Duffel Blog.com, available at <http://www.duffelblog.com/2013/01/seal-team-6-calls-zero-dark-thirty-inaccurate-say-they-dont-pop-collars-or-wear-tapout-gear>.

<sup>50</sup> Scanlon, Shiela, Col (ret.), USMC. Senior Advisor to the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense for Gender Integration. Interviewed by author on 4 March 2015.



process of SOF selection assesses the physical, moral, and mental spheres of man. Once physically exhausted, the cadre evaluate the true nature of a candidate's moral and mental capacities.

Four of the five SOF Truths reflect the intrinsic value of, and heavy investment in, the human capital in USSOCOM and why selection standards remain extremely high. The rigorous selection standards during Phase Two results in an average elimination rate between 65-85 percent, furthering reinforcing the SOF Truth that quality prevails over quantity.

In order to capture the complete scope of SOF selection from all of the Services, selection and assessment was rolled into four phases of application, physical assessment, basic and advanced skills training, and the culminating exercise. Each SOF program emphasizes different core skills, operational environments, selection criteria; and therefore the generic model is applicable in many ways.

The Chapter concludes with the organizational culture of SOF that begins in selection, and further acquired during the phases and on the SOF teams. SOF females will face barriers as they attempt to integrate into the new culture. Likewise, the current generation of male SOF operators may either accept or reject even qualified women to defend the culture, and preserve the identity they have embraced as a part of SOF selection. The next chapter assesses the next level of SOF selection and integration, associated with SOF roles, missions, and core operations. This selection and integration, the difficulty and risks operators face in execution of their skills in life-or-death missions, creates another cultural identity that prospective women operators will face.



## Chapter 4

### **SOF Missions**

*A successful special operation mission defies conventional wisdom by using a small force to defeat a much larger of well-entrenched opponent.*

-Admiral William H. McRaven

The previous chapter explored the SOF selection process and the intent of the four phases employed to select candidates with the attributes necessary to be successful in SOF. The conclusion of Chapter 3 was that SOF selection processes, throughout their phases, set very high standards. Most applicants do not pass selection. Chapter 3 concluded with the initial introduction of SOF cultural identity and the possibly hurdles that female operators might encounter.

This chapter examines SOF missions, the driving reason why SOF selection standards are so high. In particular, rather than merely repeating the various SOF roles and missions, this chapter groups them analytically into two distinct groups. Previous methods have looked at the approaches of the missions and divided them into direct and indirect action. More recently, however, the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has divided and defined special operations in a different way, lumping them under the headings of “surgical strike” and “special warfare.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter will further break down surgical strike and special warfare activities into their respective core operations for a very simple reason. This chapter argues that the type of mission, and the teams that perform them, create another separate culture into which prospective female operators will face. Finally, this chapter concludes

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<sup>1</sup> Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), [http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR\\_pubs/dr\\_a/pdf/adp3\\_05.pdf](http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/adp3_05.pdf).

with a description of the general culture of each of the branches, allowing policymakers and leaders a better understanding of another challenge of female integration into SOF.

## **Part 1: Special Operations Defined**

What defines a special operation? Former USSOCOM Commander, Admiral William H. McRaven, provides four criteria for a mission to be a special operation: it must be high risk, requires human intervention to the point of contact with the enemy, has limitations on the size of the force required, and the target or objective is defensive in nature.<sup>2</sup> Special operations forces differ from conventional forces by the missions executed using modified equipment and unconventional applications of tactics against strategic and operational objectives.<sup>3</sup> Conventional forces' operate under the standard principles of war, whereas SOF accomplish their assigned missions using six principles of special operations warfare that differ slightly from conventional forces.<sup>4</sup> These principles are simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose.<sup>5</sup> SOF operations do not negate the principles of war, but they place a different emphasis on their relative importance.<sup>6</sup> The size of SOF employed for contingencies and missions vary, but smaller force composition allows a rapidly deployable and tailored force to gain access through surprise,

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<sup>2</sup> McRaven, William H. "Special Operations: The Perfect Grand Strategy", in *Force of Choice: Perspectives on Special Operations*, Bernd Horn, J. Paul de B. Taillon, and David Last, eds. Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, 61-78, 66.

<sup>3</sup> Spulak, Robert G. Jr., *A Theory of Special Operations: the Origin, Qualities, and Use of SOF*. Joint Special Operations University, Report 07-7, Hurlburt Field, FL, The JSOU Press, October 2007, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations (Washington D.C.: Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 11 August 2011). The conventional principles of war are objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, simplicity, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.

<sup>5</sup> McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 2004, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), 1-6.

speed, and security, thus achieving their primary objective of relative superiority over the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

Conventional forces cannot deploy as quickly as SOF due to their much larger force composition and much larger support base (logistical “tail”). SOF leadership neither competes with nor substitutes SOF forces for conventional operations, but will complement conventional actions with indirect SOF support if necessary.<sup>8</sup> In fact, SOF depends so heavily on conventional force support for most of their missions, that USSOCOM recaptured the fifth and necessary SOF Truth: “most special operations require non-SOF support.”<sup>9</sup>

Conventional forces can perform certain SOF missions, but their cost in doing so is greater and they may not achieve the same results in terms of timeliness and security. SOF train for specific mission sets largely outside of the scope of conventional forces. The high importance of special operations missions led to the requirement of a separate USSOCOM funding line known as Major Force Program-11 (MFP-11), an additional means to acquire funds for specialized and advanced procurement of training and equipment for SOF. MFP-11 funds are earmarked funds for USSOCOM, separate from the MFP-2 Service related funds. To better understand why this division of funds is important, and how it gives SOF an acquisition advantage, consider the following example. An Air Force Special Tactics Squadron (STS) may use MFP-2

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of relative superiority is central to the theory of special operations advanced by Admiral McRaven. See McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> JCS, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations*, I-2. SOF perform a variety of missions during Major Combat Operations (MCO) to decrease threats and allow access for large conventional forces to prosecute their missions.

<sup>9</sup> The five SOF truths first appeared in a Congressional Research Service report to Congress in 1987, subsequently published commercially as John Collins, *Green Berets, SEALs, and Spetsnaz: US & Soviet Special Military Operations* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1987), p. xiii. For a brief discussion of the origins and restoration of the fifth SOF truth in 2009, see Association of the United States Army, *US Army Special Operations Forces: Integral to the Army and the Joint Force* (Washington, DC: AUSA, 2010), p. 6.

Service funds to acquire equipment in support of its core Air Force missions, and the STS may also use MFP-11 funds for the acquisition of equipment and operations in support in USSOCOM missions.<sup>10</sup>

As strategists look into the future to predict the next war, SOF stand ready in all their specific mission areas, and in all environments, with the capability of adapting to the next engagement. While it may take years for large conventional forces to adapt to new doctrine, SOF missions tend to stay the same.<sup>11</sup> The geographic environment and the political terrain are two unknowns in which SOF negotiate during war and peace. A few of the SOF missions in Part 2 of this chapter overlap into the conventional forces' roles, but it is the speed, security, and surprise with which SOF employ making them the force of choice for policy makers and national leaders.

## **Part 2: Special Operations: Surgical Strike and Special Warfare**

Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland, the Commander, USASOC, released a blueprint for the future of Army special operations to adapt and operate in uncertain environments entitled *Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) 2022*.

Depicted on the next page in Figure 2, *ARSOF 2022* divides the mission areas of SOF between two distinct critical capabilities: surgical strike and special warfare operations.

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<sup>10</sup> Defense Acquisition Program. Major Force (MFP) - Defense Acquisition Glossary. <https://dap.dau.mil/glossary/pages/2192.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> SOF-specific missions are outlined in 10 US Code § 167, "Unified combatant command for special operations forces." Available online at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/167>. An example of the time it takes for proof of concept to execution can be realized when the US Army performed an internal review on its Cold War model of divisional orientation and restructured itself in modular brigades known as Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). The initial concept was devised by Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki in 1999, but implemented in 2004 by the new Army Chief of Staff General Schoomaker. SOF on the other hand, are structured and manned to be more adaptive.

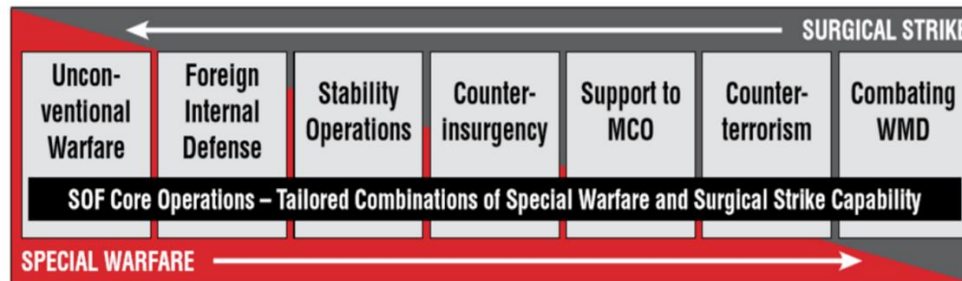


Figure 2. Surgical Strike and Special Warfare representation from ARSOF 2022.

*Source: US Army: ARSOF 2022.*

Although certain ARSOF specialize in their core operations, such as unconventional warfare, there is a significant overlap of core activities and capabilities of all ARSOF teams. Surgical strike operations expend most of their energy and resources training for counterterrorism (CT), combating WMD (CP), direct action (DA), support to Major Combat Operations (MCO), hostage rescue (HR), and can perform limited special warfare roles, but are not necessarily the force of choice, or the best optimized, for such roles. Likewise, the special warfare operators mostly focus on the unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), counterinsurgency (COIN), stability operations to include military information support operations (MISO) and civil affairs operations (CA). Similar to the surgical strike operations, the special warfare forces can be used in the other mission areas of surgical strike, but they are not the optimal choice to conduct such missions.

From an overall force development and employment perspective, the potential introduction of female SOF operators in theory is useful across the entire spectrum of the special operations in both surgical strike and special warfare. However, as the subsequent analysis will suggest, special warfare organizations could derive some benefit from using gender-integrated teams to conduct their missions. What follows

is a short discussion, and brief overview, of the distinct roles and missions SOF perform under surgical strike and special warfare.

### **Part 3: Surgical Strike Missions**

Surgical strike missions are short-duration, high-intensity actions that have immediate impact, involve a high-level of risk to the operators, and therefore the operators possess a high-risk, “no-mission-failure” mindset. These missions use a larger footprint of assets and logistics (compared to special warfare operations) and often involve forcible entry operations, more commonly known as “raids,” into denied and hostile environments. Surgical strike missions consist of CT, CP, DA, MCO and HR. A description of each activity follows below.

#### **Counterterrorism (CT)**

CT are the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond directly against terrorist networks, and indirectly influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks. SOF conducts CT missions as special operations by covert, clandestine, or low-visibility means.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, Congress tasked USSOCOM to take the lead in the war against global terrorism, placing heavy emphasis within SOF on the killing or capturing of terrorists.<sup>13</sup> Although SOF conducts these CT operations at the tactical level, the missions can achieve strategic effects. Probably the most famous recent example is the raid against Osama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan in 2011 that resulted in his death.

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<sup>12</sup> Howard, Russell D. *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, August 1996. Diane Publishing Co. 132.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 6 February 2006.



### **Counterproliferation (CP)**

CP are the actions taken to locate, identify, seize, destroy, render safe, transport, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>14</sup> This mission is still at the forefront of USSOCOM because of the strategic cost of a nation or a state-sponsored terrorist organization acquiring the components of any such device. The stated desire of organizations such as al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups to obtain and use WMD against the United States has elevated this mission in importance for SOF surgical strike forces.

### **Direct Action (DA)**

DA consists largely of short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by SOF to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel in denied areas. In the conduct of these operations, SOF may: employ raid, ambush or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; conduct independent sabotage; and conduct anti-ship operations.<sup>15</sup> The targets of DA missions often have strategic or operational significance.<sup>16</sup>

### **Major Combat Operations (MCO)**

MCO are large-scale operations against a state. During MCO SOF can operate independently or with CF (conventional forces). SOF add unique capabilities to achieve sometimes otherwise unattainable objectives. Integration enables the Joint Force Commander (JFC) to maximize CF and SOF core competencies. SOF special skills and low-

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<sup>14</sup> Harclerode, Peter. *Secret Soldiers: Special Forces Soldiers in the War Against Terrorism*. London, UK: Cassel and Co., 2000, 98.

<sup>15</sup> JCS, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations*, 2-21.

<sup>16</sup> Howard, *Special Operations Forces*, 1996, 132.



visibility capabilities also provide an adaptable and scalable military response in situations or crises requiring tailored, precise, and focused use of force. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, SOF and CF worked together to capture or eliminate several key enemy leaders, including Saddam Hussein. The integration of SOF and US Army 4th Infantry Division (ID) steadily targeted and eliminated Saddam's support by capturing and interrogating his political, military, and logistical supporters.<sup>17</sup>

### **Hostage Rescue and Personnel Recovery (HR and PR)**

HR and PR operations are sensitive crisis-response missions, usually conducted under significant time constraints in difficult terrain, that include offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorist threats and incidents, including recapture of US citizens, facilities, installations, and sensitive material.<sup>18</sup> Recent successes include the rescue of Capt. Richard Phillips and Jessica Buchanan while recent failures in these highly risky and often dangerous missions include Luke Somers, James Foley, and Linda Norgrove.<sup>19</sup>

### **Part 4: Special Warfare Missions**

Special warfare differs from surgical strike missions in a number of ways. The time horizon for success in special warfare is much longer, making such missions more operational and strategic in their planning. The lengthy time horizon is often a function of two factors: the time it takes to gain access and build relationships; and, the time needed to

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<sup>17</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 16 July 2014). [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/news\\_pubs/jp3\\_05.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/news_pubs/jp3_05.pdf), I-6.

<sup>18</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), 2-8.

<sup>19</sup> For details see Peter Bergen and David Stermann, "Why hostage rescues fail," CNN.com (9 December 2014), available online at <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/08/opinion/bergen-sterman-why-hostage-rescues-fail>.

build credible, capable foreign forces. Given the time it takes, and the indirect nature of working “by, with, and through” others, US SOF advisors may not notice the effects and outcomes of their labors for years and even decades. Special warfare teams tend to be much smaller than surgical strike teams, and place great emphasis on gaining access to people and locations. Special warfare missions consist of UW, FID, COIN, military information support operations (MISO), and civil affairs (CA). A short description of each follows.

### **Unconventional Warfare (UW)**

UW are the activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.<sup>20</sup> Classic examples of UW success are the special operations in support of the French Resistance in World War II and the opening phase of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where American special operators, primarily US Army Special Forces, supported and enabled the Northern Alliance and other tribal leaders in their campaign to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

### **Foreign Internal Defense (FID)**

FID involves the participation by US civilian and military agencies in any of the action programs taken by the host government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, and terrorism.<sup>21</sup> US personnel engaged in FID missions offer training and advisory support to host nations fighting domestic insurgencies, often in conjunction with equipment provided by American security assistance programs. FID is most effective at levels that avoid, by choice or by law,

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<sup>20</sup> JCS, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations*, II-8.

<sup>21</sup> Harclerode, *Secret Soldiers*, 2000, 98.

the deployment of large numbers of US military personnel. Two historical examples of FID successes are the Special Forces support in training and equipping the Bolivian Rangers that hunted down and killed Ernesto “Che” Guevara in Bolivia (1968) and the numerically restricted support of the Government of El Salvador (1979-1992).

### **Counterinsurgency (COIN)**

COIN involves the comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. SOF can provide light, agile, high-capability teams able to operate discreetly in local communities, directly communicating with target audiences and influencing their behaviors. Whereas FID is a SOF mission, COIN is a broader mission set for conventional forces, and SOF will play a limited supporting role.

### **Military Information Support Operations (MISO)**

As a core activity, MISO integrates all of the other core operations and activities by increasing the psychological effects inherent in their application. Other core activities may support MISO by serving as the means to achieve specific psychological effects. MISO augments other capabilities or can be the primary task in some situations.<sup>22</sup> MISO falls under the Stability Operations in Figure 2, ARSOF 2022.

### **Civil Affairs Operations (CA)**

CA are actions conducted to influence the host nation environment. CA operations are conducting using specialized personnel to interface with the host nation populace to establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities

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<sup>22</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), 2-7.

(government and nongovernment). The CA operators also interact with the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operations to facilitate military operations and to consolidate operational objectives. As with MISO, CA falls under the Stability Operations in Figure 2, ARSOF 2022.

### **Part 5: SOF Culture Reinforced by the Missions**

The preceding discussion outlined the various SOF missions that fall under the two categories of surgical strike and special warfare operations. Having a baseline understanding of these missions is important as their nature, including the time horizon, operating environment, and relative level of risk, has an impact on SOF culture as this section will show. SOF culture begins from the first day of selection. As the new candidates complete selection and enter the operational SOF units, they assimilate to their new unit based on the roles and missions of the respective unit.

Dr. Edgar Schein defines the culture of a group as, “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”<sup>23</sup> Schein employs three levels of culture. These levels are: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.<sup>24</sup>

Cultural artifacts are those tangible phenomena that you can see, hear, and touch when you encounter a new culture. SOF were among the first units to develop a specific, but now common artifact: the “challenge coin.” For many SOF units, artifacts this can be the coveted

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<sup>23</sup> Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2010, 24.

beret<sup>25</sup> received upon graduation, an Army Ranger tab (and the rivalry that accompanies so-called “short tabs,” the Ranger tab, versus the “long tab,” or Special Forces tab), a Navy SEAL Trident, a new “title” or nickname, or even a unit tattoo.<sup>26</sup> Rituals and initiations are also symbolic for an organization. In some units, in order to gain acceptance into the culture, the new operator must complete the initiation ritual.<sup>27</sup> Failing to complete the ritual may have irreversible consequences, including shunning and other forms of social ostracism.

The espoused beliefs and behaviors are the values, norms, and rules of behavior that members of the culture use as a way of depicting the culture to themselves and others.<sup>28</sup> SOF units value hard work and exceptional skill and mission performance, and the teams are quick to correct one of their own for substandard performance or behavior.

The last level of culture is the basic underlying assumptions. This is the unconscious, taken-for granted beliefs, and values of a group that can determine behaviors, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.<sup>29</sup> An example of this level of culture in SOF is dedication and self-interest. The individual operator will place the well-being of the organization and the team’s welfare above his (or her) self-interest. Selection, in part, drives

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<sup>25</sup> Earning a beret in the Rangers, SF, PJs, and CCT are symbolic rituals in an operator’s career. It takes many months of performance and perseverance to receive the beret- symbolizing acceptance into an elite force. The Rangers and Special Forces culture was disrupted in 2000 when the Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki announced the approval for the entire force to wear the black beret. At the time of this decision, only the Rangers and AF TACPs (tactical air control party) wore the distinctive black beret. Department of the Army, *Memorandum: CSA Sends- The Army Black Beret: 030011Z 00*, 03 November 2000. <http://www.army.mil/features/beret/beret.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> The “titles” bestowed upon operators such as SEAL, PJ, Combat Controller, Force Recon, SF, and Ranger can sometimes yield more influence than does the individual’s rank.

<sup>27</sup> These rituals and initiations are all legal and ethical. The officers and senior-enlisted oversee these ceremonies to make sure the intent is in line with unit and service values. The consequences of a member failing to perform a ritual will stay with that operator for the duration of his tour at the unit.

<sup>28</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2010, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2010, 24.

this selflessness from the first day of the process that the team is the strongest unit, and individuals who do not perform together as a team fail. Therefore, it is in each operator's interest to place the team before themselves.

These three levels of culture—the artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions—all exist in SOF units. The nature of the mission sets between surgical strike and special warfare differ, and so do their respective cultures and what they value. Female SOF operators have utility, but as mentioned in Chapter Three, acceptance into the sub-culture of an organization is not that easy, and it may be quite difficult for women to become accepted into surgical strike organizations for reasons clear in the next section.

### **Part 6: The Culture within Surgical Strike Organizations**

As mentioned previously, surgical strikes are fast-paced and short duration missions. The missions have an immediate impact and assume an enormous level of risk associated with them. As a result, the individual operators possess a high-risk “no-fail” mindset. These attributes are important to surgical strike organizations as they develop a cultural over decades of operations and countless training evolutions. As the culture evolves, it becomes part of the unit and maintains cohesion and a sense of belonging within the unit, and surreptitiously has a hand in how funds are spent, what training the operators embrace, and how they are going to be equipped. Surgical strike operators place great emphasis on their team identity through their assigned roles and missions. Individuals within the teams place strict adherence on maintaining physical standards and advanced tactical skills. The camaraderie and culture established during team training, along with constant feedback from peers, constructs a small cohesive fighting force with unmatched capabilities.

The nature of surgical strike operations, from planning to mission execution, can be thought of in terms similar to a sine wave. There are moments of relative tranquility, to great intense spurts of adrenaline when the team is infiltrating to the target area and actions on the objective.<sup>30</sup> The operators tend to be very intense and handle uncertain situations with a combination of instinct and training. The team dynamics are such that when things go poorly during a mission, the operators are capable of quickly recapturing their composure and completing their objective.

This culture on surgical strike teams leads to their identity as the most elite members of the fighting force. Surgical strike operators tend to have a culture of rivalry against other SOF.<sup>31</sup> This healthy rivalry leads to competition within and between units, which has the net effect improving capabilities across the services and pushing individual units to maximize their training in order to become the force of choice. The culture of these teams takes an incredibly long time to develop; any attempt at modification (internal) and change (external), however, often meets with internal resistance from the operators themselves. If the modification to a culture is internal, dictated from the unit or within the chain of command within USSOCOM, it can have certain effects on that unit's culture. If the operators perceive the modification as a benefit, they will embrace it. Similarly, if the proposed modification is constrictive or restraining, operators will not embrace it. Change to a culture, dictated from outside the unit and outside of USSOCOM, will have an adverse effect.

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<sup>30</sup> Infiltration are the actions used by SOF to move through the front lines into enemy territory undetected using advanced methods and techniques such as: tactical ground vehicles, helicopter/tilt-rotor operations, parachute operations, maritime to include tactical vessels and scuba systems.

<sup>31</sup> An example for this can be broken down to the flight or platoon level, up to the unit, on to other units, and out to other services. The SEALs are notorious for bragging rights between the teams and definitely between geographically separated Naval Special Warfare Groups, found on the East and West Coast.



## **Part 7: The Culture within Special Warfare Organizations**

Special warfare missions, as the previous discussion suggested, are long duration and strategic in nature. The operators in special warfare think about the next two to three moves beyond what is happening today, in order to gain a competitive advantage over their opponents. These operators are skilled, intelligent, and maintain advanced tactical skills. Their strengths lie within patience, intelligence gathering and collection, persistence, observation, understanding human behavior and motivations, and learning the cultures of their indigenous partners.

Special warfare consists of activities involving the combination of lethal and non-lethal actions by a specially trained and educated force whose members have a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language. The operators remain proficient in small unit tactics, subversion, and sabotage, as well as the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat units in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.<sup>32</sup> Success in special warfare activities usually takes months or years to accomplish as the teams establish relationships with the host nation or indigenous forces. A factor in measuring effectiveness in special warfare is access to key locations and people. Female SOF could be a realistic option in building those relationships with the women of the host nation, securing those relationships and earning their trust, in turn giving the SOF teams further access to human resources.<sup>33</sup>

Given that special warfare activities work by, with, or through others in order to achieve success, and not their own specific actions

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<sup>32</sup> United States Army Special Operations Command, *ARSOF 2022*, Special Warfare, United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, [http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022\\_vFinal.pdf](http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022_vFinal.pdf), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Even if the female SOF operator interacted only with the women and children of the host country, her presence could have positive exponential effects on the mission, much like the Cultural Support Teams and the Female Engagement Teams. In many countries, the local women are armed and fighting alongside the men. Salih, Cale, "The Kurdish Women Fighting ISIS." *Special to CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/12/world/cnnphotos-female-peshmerga-fighters>. 12 March 2015.

against the enemy, such activities are the embodiment of the “indirect approach” to warfare.<sup>34</sup> The focus within such activities requires establishing a presence in the Human Domain, and operating expertly with the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence the human behavior in a population-centric conflict. The indirect approach of special warfare relies for success on the building of long-term relationships and gaining the trust of indigenous forces, to improve the latter’s confidence and capability. The Army’s foremost component to conduct special warfare activities are their Special Forces (SF), more commonly known as “Green Berets” due their specific cultural artifact, with the assistance of CA and MISO forces.

As special warfare activities have a much longer timeline for success than surgical strike, they require the permanent forward presence of SF teams focused on specific geographic regions with specific culture and language knowledge, skills, and abilities. In *ARSOF 2022*, General Cleveland acknowledges that the culture of SF has shifted in the last 14 years of combat to one of rapid response counterterrorism, or in SOF terms, raids or DA, to the detriment of such knowledge, skills, and abilities. *ARSOF 2022* also suggests that special warfare activities will be more important in the future than ever before, requiring a shift in organizationally in culture and training.<sup>35</sup>

Special warfare operators are also a different breed of SOF. The core mission of SF is to train other forces. They must possess the credibility of knowledge and combat fighting skills in the eyes of the forces they will be training. Selected for their maturity, skillsets, trainability, military experience, cohesiveness; special warfare soldiers are adept in uncertain environments.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The “indirect approach” to strategy and warfare was made popular by B.H. Liddell Hart in *Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (New York: Meridian, 1991).

<sup>35</sup> ARSOF 2022, [http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022\\_vFinal.pdf](http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022_vFinal.pdf), 13.

<sup>36</sup> To meet the need for more SOF operators after 11 September 2001, ARSOC instituted a program of direct accession in the Special Forces called the “18X” program. While a

## **Part 8: Core Activities of Special Operations: PE, SR, SFA**

Core activities in special operations include those missions to support both surgical strike and special warfare. The core activities encompass preparation of the environment (PE), special reconnaissance (SR), and security force assistance (SFA).<sup>37</sup>

### **Preparation of the Environment (PE)**

The PE mission is a core activity and an overarching term for actions taken by or in support of SOF to develop the environment for current or future operations and activities. The regional mechanisms and characteristics of SOF provide access, and capability, to influence nations where the presence of conventional US forces is not warranted.<sup>38</sup>

### **Special Reconnaissance (SR)**

SR is reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by SOF to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance in denied areas against targets of strategic or operational significance.<sup>39</sup> Using SOF for SR enables the JFC an additional capability to achieve objectives with his conventional forces that otherwise may not be attainable. In Chapter 6, a case study highlighting a female SOF operator paired with a male

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novel approach, what the 18X operators often lacked with a depth of skills and experience and maturity traditional associated with Special Forces operators. For a first-hand account of an 18X operator, see Blake Miles, "The SF Babies, Parts I-IV," SOFRep.com (29 January 2014), available online at <http://sofrep.com/31708/sf-babies-part/>.

<sup>37</sup> JCS, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations*, II-3.

<sup>38</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), 2-8.

<sup>39</sup> Shultz, Richard H. Jr. and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and W. Bradley Stock. *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, August 1996. Diane Publishing Co.

counterpart, displayed intelligence gathering results that far surpassed what the men alone could provide. Women generally have a less threatening demeanor and their access tends to go unnoticed unlike their male counterparts. Female SOF could be the force of choice for SR operations in support of surgical strike operations.

### **Security Force Assistance (SFA)**

Security force assistance are the Department of Defense's activities that contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions. Initially though, SOF performing SFA have assess the foreign security forces they will assist and then establish a shared, continual way of assessing throughout development of the foreign security forces.<sup>40</sup> As other nations employ women in their armed forces, a female SOF operator would be a force enhancer during SFA operations as a role model to host-nation female soldiers.<sup>41</sup>

Women have an advantage to gain access to the indigenous female population of a culture. An example would perhaps have a female SF operator on an Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) team integrated with the females of a village. As more countries begin to focus their internal attention to human rights, a female SOF operator on an ODA could have strategic effects for a nation. In OEF, the female Afghani SOF operators (ANSOF) and the CST/FET elicited more respect from the male and female villagers than did their Afghani and US male SOF counterparts.<sup>42</sup> The ANSOF females were able to become role models for the villages in the Pashtun tribal regions. The Afghan villagers almost regarded them as a third gender, acknowledging that they were indeed

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<sup>40</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters- Department of the Army, 31 August 2012), 2-5.

<sup>41</sup> Salih, *The Kurdish Women Fighting ISIS*, 12 March 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Scanlon, Shiela, Col (ret.), USMC. Senior Advisor to the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense for Gender Integration. Interviewed by author, 4 March 2015.

“special.” Access to these remote cultures using women is necessary in order to establish stability.<sup>43</sup> The special warfare culture looks at the problem set much longer, and therefore the utility of female operators may play an enormous role in these missions.

### **Part 9: Female Integration into Special Operations Forces**

Female SOF could have a role in surgical strike missions, provided they meet the selection criteria and fit within the operational culture that places the greatest emphasis on teamwork, reliability, and excellence in performance. The selection criteria for the operators for such missions must remain extraordinarily high due to their nature. Attempts to make the standards of a surgical strike selection program “gender-neutral” will most likely be perceived as an attack on the identity, culture, integrity, and capability of surgical strike units. If the standards remain at the current level, the numbers of potential female SOF operators may rapidly decrease if such operators routinely fail out of selection. Those female operators who do pass selection will have garnered the respect of the operators (again, as long as selection criteria are not modified). The female operator will then have to assimilate to the culture and climate of her gaining unit, and that may be an extremely difficult, although not impossible, task to accomplish.<sup>44</sup>

As USSOCOM contends with the selection processes and the evaluation of gender-neutral standards, the goal of its process is the employment and utility of the female SOF operator. Most studies

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<sup>43</sup> Scanlon, Sr. Advisor to the Afghanistan MOD for Gender Integration. Interviewed by author, 4 March 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Ford, Sarah. *One Up: A Woman in Action with the SAS*. London, UK: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, 141, 200. Chapter 6 will explore this further. The women of the 14 Intelligence Company were held to the same standards as men were. Even after passing the rigorous selection program, special operator Sarah Ford had to adjust to the new culture of the unit, and prove herself in operations before becoming “one of the guys.”

currently undertaken on this issue focus on the selection process attempt to figure out if the current standards are too hard for women, if women have what it takes to become a SOF operator, how the current SOF community feel about female integration, or the notion that selection programs will be diluted to allow the entrance of diversity.<sup>45</sup> As policymakers hand the DOD the difficult equation of female integration into SOF, it is upon USSOCOM and the Services to maintain the capabilities of their forces.

If special operations have two critical capabilities of surgical strike and special warfare, women could possibly have a place in both of these mission sets. In surgical strike, women have to face the pressures of a physical crucible of selection, but if they meet the standards, their ability to assimilate in the unit is a little easier. As assaulters, these women would be filling manpower billets like their male counterparts, and purely based on their capability as a shooter. As key enablers for surgical strike operations, however, the advanced placement of women in SR and PE roles could be decisive.

On the other end of the special operations spectrum, special warfare, a female operator could meet the standards of selection, but may have a taller hurdle to break into the subculture of the team. An SF ODA, for example, is comprised of a twelve-man team. The small size of this element forms extremely tight social bonds. Each ODA has a chemistry that is unique.<sup>46</sup> Even the new male SF team members have

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<sup>45</sup> Richard, Jennifer, Capt. Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs. "Volunteers Needed to Test Gender-Neutral Physical Standards." 7 May 2015. <http://www.afrc.af.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/136/Article/587944/volunteers-needed-to-test-gender-neutral-physical-standards.aspx>. Dr. Neal Baumgartner, AF lead on this Battlefield Airmen initiative is heading this charge to determine the entrance standards, the selection program standards, and to assess the operation standards to accurately reflect operational relevancy.

<sup>46</sup> Simons, Anna. "The Evolution of the SOF Soldier: An Anthropological Perspective." Excerpt taken from Horn, Bernd and J. Paul de B. Taillon, and David Last. *Force of Choice: Perspectives on Special Operations*. Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, 86.



challenges trying to fit in to such a unique social environment; the chemistry of the team has to allow it. New members to SOF teams, based on my personal experience, usually try too hard to impress the rest of the team. Female SOF members could easily fall into this category because they would inevitably feel that although they passed selection, they would want to prove to the male operators that they belong in a team. In overcompensating to try to become accepted on a team, the other team members may retreat into their own social groups and prevent any overall unit cohesion.<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Special operations are high-risk missions, requiring human intervention at the point of contact with the enemy. They are characterized by their small size, relative to conventional forces, and the target or objective is most often on the defensive—what Carl von Clausewitz called “the stronger form of war.” The chapter discussed the nature of special operations missions, broken down into two mission areas of surgical strike and special warfare. These two mission areas have distinct mission sets underneath them. The nature of the unique mission areas and mission sets produce differences in outlook and culture.

Although females are currently going through various test phases of SOF integration, including selection, there very well may be a place for them in surgical strike and special warfare units.<sup>48</sup> In surgical strike units, female operators will have to face challenges up front in selection, giving the highly rigorous selection criteria and standards. If successful, however, such operators may find easier acceptance into the culture by

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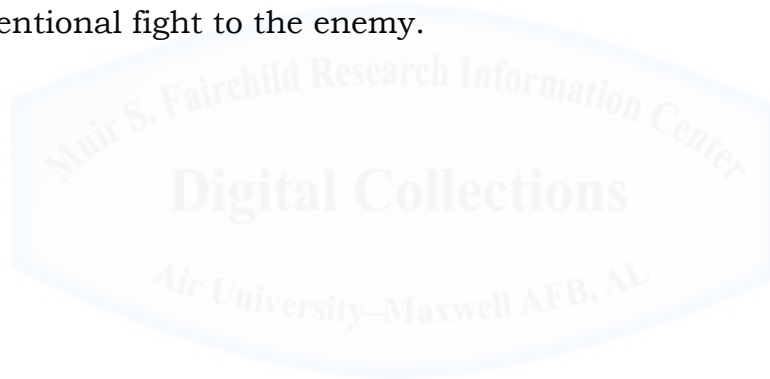
<sup>47</sup> Simons, “The Evolution of the SOF Soldier,” 102.

<sup>48</sup> Richard, Jennifer, Capt. Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs. “Volunteers Needed to Test Gender-Neutral Physical Standards.” 7 May 2015. <http://www.afrc.af.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/136/Article/587944/volunteers-needed-to-test-gender-neutral-physical-standards.aspx>.



having passed the selection program. In special warfare, however, the barrier to entry may not be related to either the selection process or the mission area. The ultimate challenge within special warfare is being accepted on a smaller team where the chemistry varies from each team and proves even difficult for new male operators.

Chapter 5 and 6 are two case studies, revealing elite units employing female operators during World War II and in Northern Ireland to target German forces and Irish terrorist organizations, respectively. The requirement for women in these units filled an operational necessity, as they were able to gain access to remote areas in occupied countries and villages because of their gender. Once the team achieved access, they quickly used their advanced skills in special warfare to bring the unconventional fight to the enemy.



## Chapter 5

### **Case Study #1: The Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS)**

Chapter 2 laid out the legal framework for women to gain access to military occupations due to the operational necessity driven by wartime requirements. Chapter 3 described the selection process for special operations forces (SOF) and described how selection influences the culture within SOF units. Chapter 4 examined SOF roles and missions and delineated between short-term surgical strike and long-term special warfare mission sets. In addition, Chapter 4 examined some of the cultural differences between the surgical strike and the special warfare operators. Despite some contemporary claims that women cannot or should not be special operators, this chapter explores one historical period in which an elite organization used women. Operational necessity, more than anything else, drove senior leaders of the SOE and OSS during World War II to select, train, and use female special operators. Given the nature of the war, which pitted the democracies of the United States and Great Britain against totalitarian Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in a struggle for their very survival, women overcame the social barriers to serving in the military. Leaders such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill argued it was the patriotic duty of all citizens to mobilize against common enemies bent on their destruction.

As Chapter 2 suggested, however, the long-standing restrictions on mobilizing women to serve as uniformed members in combat did not extend once the operational necessity, in the form of supreme national emergency, passed as there was no social acceptance and legal authority in place for this to happen. The nature of sabotage and subversion missions, what we would now label “special warfare,” along with the

secrecy of paramilitary organizations such as the SOE and OSS, allowed them more flexibility in the employment of women during World War II. This case study will describe the similarities and the differences on how each organization selected female operators and illustrate how they employed them during the war through vignettes.

### **Origins for a New Capability**

The threat of German domination over Europe during World War II forced the United Kingdom to create an organization that would gain a strategic advantage against the Axis powers using both unconventional and “ungentlemanly means.”<sup>1</sup> Following the Battle of Dunkirk and the fall of France, Prime Minister (PM) Winston Churchill formed the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in July of 1940 as a way of striking back against Nazi Germany in occupied Europe.<sup>2</sup> With the newly appointed Dr. Hugh Dalton as its SOE’s Head, PM Churchill issued him a brief and simple directive: “And now we set Europe ablaze.”<sup>3</sup> The primary role of the SOE was to carry out sabotage and subversion operations, not too different from “unconventional warfare” missions like those for which the US prepares today; that would entail the training of covert agents and indigenous forces to cause disruption throughout the occupied countries of Europe. The SOE would eventually supply tons of arms and specialized equipment, such as explosives and radios, and provide training and leadership for resistance movements. This small organization of highly trained operatives would eventually strategically shape the battlefield space for larger conventional Allied forces during

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<sup>1</sup> Boyce, Fredric and Douglas Everett. *SOE: The Scientific Secrets*. Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing Limited. 2003, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson, Peter and Joan Bright Astley. *Gubbins and SOE*. London, UK: Leo Cooper, 1993, 75. Dr. Hugh Dalton was appointed as the Head of the SOE. At the time, he was the Minister of Economic Warfare, and PM Churchill decided that this is where SOE should reside. The initial concept had three branched in SOE, propaganda, subversion, and planning. The planning branch was quickly absorbed into the subversion branch.

<sup>3</sup> Dalton, Hugh, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs, 1931-1945*. London, UK: Muller Publishing. 1957, 366.

and after the invasion and liberation of France, Holland, Belgium, and Norway, among others.

The same month in which PM Churchill charged Dalton with standing up the SOE, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order across the Atlantic appointing Colonel William “Wild Bill” Donovan as the Coordinator of Information (COI). COI would eventually evolve into an organization similar to the SOE, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).<sup>4</sup> Prior to his appointment as COI, Donovan met with King George IV, PM Churchill, as well as members of the UK cabinet as part of a fact-finding mission for President Roosevelt. The British leadership granted Donovan access to its early warning radars, coastal defense systems, and the newest fighter aircraft.

The information collected by Donovan clearly made him aware that the United States lacked its own adequate intelligence-gathering organization. Based on the success of his first trip to England, Donovan made numerous other trips to evaluate the military materiel support requested by the British government. Discussions with the leaders of SIS and the SOE opened up an entire new world to Donovan, the world of espionage, in which cheating, stealing, lying, torture, and even assassination were standard practices to obtain and safeguard information. Donovan quickly learned how the British agents infiltrated into occupied Europe by sea from fast boats or submarines, as well as by special-modified aircraft that touched down in soft meadows or those who parachuted into occupied territory. As part of his fact-finding mission, SIS and SOE granted Donovan access to their training facilities for their operators.<sup>5</sup> Donovan’s trips, and his subsequent reports on what he saw and experienced with the British intelligence services, provided

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<sup>4</sup> MacPherson, Nelson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London: The Story of the OSS*. London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, 47.

<sup>5</sup> Foot, M.R.D. *SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British Special Operations Executive in France 1940-1944*. London, UK: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office. 1966, 31.

him with a blueprint for the creation of an American counterpart organization—the OSS.<sup>6</sup> As there was a recognized divide amongst the British SIS and SOE, between intelligence collection and operations, the OSS would organize their SI (secret intelligence) and SO (special operations) into sections that would assist one another.

Regarded as the UK's "fourth arm", the SOE had been set up for success due to the need to mobilize, motivate, and spur resistance movements in occupied Europe into action.<sup>7</sup> Donovan's OSS on the other hand, was initially held in contempt by the US Army, Navy, and eventually the FBI leadership due in part by the COI/OSS' direct access President Roosevelt.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Donovan wanted to perform more than secret intelligence and coordination operations, and therefore established a permanent OSS office in London to maintain relationships with its foreign sister services. The office would serve another useful purpose by establishing a forward presence close to Europe for his operators and planning staff. These relationships and operating locations broadened the OSS' views and brokered a "competitive cooperation" between the SOE and OSS.<sup>9</sup> It also allowed personnel from the OSS London office to learn the British methods of fighting the irregular conflict using psychological warfare, secret intelligence, and sabotage.<sup>10</sup> Both organizations were able to reevaluate planning from successes and

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<sup>6</sup> MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London*, 2003, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*. 1966, 9-10. The SOE was the "fourth arm" as a complement to the other three arms in the British arsenal, the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, and Royal Army. The SOE was an integrated politico-military striking force that could work alongside UK conventional forces, or bring down the enemy from within his own regime. The British were well versed in subversive methods that were successful in India, Afghanistan, and Egypt- extending the British Empire. Therefore, the senior leaders of the United Kingdom readily accepted the inclusion of a new subversive organization during World War II.

<sup>8</sup> MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London*, 2003, 49.

<sup>9</sup> MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London*, 2003, 264. The US and the UK fostered a competitive cooperation between themselves in a cohesive working environment; however, the two Allies were still in competition throughout the war to see which nation would come out as a regional hegemon.

<sup>10</sup> MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London*, 2003, 51.

failures in the field and together they grasped the strategic importance of passing secure communications back to Allied headquarters, methods that they refined during the course of the war.

The intelligence and subversive operations of both the SOE and OSS had strategic effects and bolstered morale for the Allied conventional forces. Both the SOE and the OSS ran different branches and sections in support of their networks of agents, or “circuits.”<sup>11</sup> Each of the branches and sections had different tasks and operational requirements in support of the circuits.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of which organization an operator belonged to, after 1943 they all eventually fell underneath the direction and control of the Special Forces Headquarters and ultimately, the Allied Chiefs of Staff.

SOE and OSS operators had volunteered for the tasks they knew would be dangerous. Part of the danger resulted from the fact that many of their tasks lay outside the boundaries of conduct set by international laws for normal times and normal wars.<sup>13</sup> Special operations were not unique in this “extra-normative” regard. World War II had numerous battlefields and fronts, including domestic ones, along with a range of strategic targets including population centers and industrial cities. The improvement of the performance of aircraft in warfare led to the strategic bombing of targets in Holland, Great Britain, Japan, and Germany that made little, if any distinction between soldiers and civilians, or between men, women, and children. Given the behavior of Nazi German and Imperial Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen, who operated with little regard for the formal rules of war, Allied leaders felt they had little choice

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<sup>11</sup> The circuits were the operational teams that were in occupied territories throughout the world. These fielded operational teams provided intelligence gathering, subversion, espionage, sabotage, propaganda, and building the trust of local resistance groups through arms and supplies.

<sup>12</sup> There were numerous branches and sections of the SOE and OSS that provided operational and logistical support to the circuits. These included maritime, air operations, morale operations, foreign national sections, special operations, research and analysis section, schools and training, counter-intelligence, and operations section.

<sup>13</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*. 1966, xix.

but to use every available tool to counter Hitler's war efforts. These tools included partisans and resistance movements, comprised of members who rarely wore uniforms and often conducted ambushes or assassinations of German military and security personnel and sabotage of German facilities. The character of this new war, in other words, established the operational necessity for creating the SOE and OSS. Employing female agents in occupied territories was also driven by the operational necessity to field as many qualified agents as possible and therefore organizations began recruiting them for selection.

### **Selection Processes of the SOE**

The SOE began their selection process using a four-stage method. The phases consisted of the Preliminary Schools, the Paramilitary Schools, the Finishing Schools, and the Holding Schools.<sup>14</sup> The SOE selection was open to British civilians and military members, foreign nationals, and women. The women of the SOE completed the same training as the men, but with the primary goal of employment as couriers and radio operators.<sup>15</sup>

The Preliminary Schools evaluated the students' character and potential for dangerous clandestine work, and their ability to operate alone for weeks at a time with little outside support. The SOE employed the reverse method of selection here as to eliminate the undesirable candidates. The Preliminary Schools in essence became Phases One and Two of the current SOF selection model outlined in Chapter 3. The

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<sup>14</sup> Public Record Office, Secret History Files. *SOE Syllabus: Lessons in Ungentlemanly Warfare, World War II*. Surrey, UK: Public Record Office, 2001, 2. Each of the schools had multiple facilities used to divide the candidates based on different instruction and nationalities.

<sup>15</sup> Cunningham, Cyril, Beaulieu: *The Finishing School for Secret Agents*. London, UK: Leo Cooper. 1998, 77. Women were noted to be particularly good at courier secret messages, as they were less conspicuous than their male counterparts were, and readily passed through German checkpoints with little to no interference.



Preliminary Schools performed physical tests and conditioning, and psychological evaluations to test the physical, mental, and moral domains for the candidates. The instructors assessed the agents' character and potential, without ever revealing to them what SOE did.<sup>16</sup> The activities in the Preliminary Schools covered physical training, weapons handling, unarmed combat, demolitions, map reading, tradecraft, and basic signaling.<sup>17</sup>

After successful completion of the Preliminary Schools, the candidate would enter the Paramilitary Schools. In this training, the candidates received advanced skill sets on how to attack ships with special devices, commando raids, parachute training, silent killing, and advanced techniques for all of the tradecraft learned in the Preliminary Schools.<sup>18</sup>

The final portion of SOE selection and training was the Finishing School. It was only when the candidates reached the Finishing School that the instructors told them exactly which organization they were assessing for and what the nature of the work actually entailed. The Finishing School curriculum was quite complex, using five departments. Department A taught the main points of clandestine work, personal security, methods of communication, and the recruitment and handling of agents, and surveillance and counter-surveillance techniques. It also stressed the importance of cover stories, how to handle arrest and interrogation techniques while maintaining composure.<sup>19</sup> Department B conducted exercises relating to all of the techniques acquired in Department A. Department C dealt with the organization of enemy forces, both overt and covert. Instruction dealt heavily on the intelligence side as they focused mainly on the German forces.

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<sup>16</sup> Ross, Bernie. "Training SOE Saboteurs in World War Two." *BBC*. 17 February 2011. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe\\_training\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe_training_01.shtml).

<sup>17</sup> Public Record Office, *SOE Syllabus*, 2001, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Public Record Office, *SOE Syllabus*, 2001, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Public Record Office, *SOE Syllabus*, 2001, 6.

Department D handled the propaganda or morale warfare instruction. Finally, Department E handled the use of codes, ciphers, and secret inks.<sup>20</sup>

The last school SOE would attend was the Holding School. The Holding Schools were the final site for agents awaiting their deployments, in which they would receive their final briefing before entering occupied Europe. Experienced agents and intelligence officers would conduct these briefings for the operators before their missions. Previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the rite of incorporation through socialization and acceptance onto team did not take place at the SOE Schools, but rather in combat.<sup>21</sup>

### **Selection Processes of the OSS**

The OSS selection program evolved from the SOE process. The OSS Selection and Training (S&T) Branch was responsible for the recruitment and assessment of candidates in the US and overseas.<sup>22</sup> Phase One of OSS selection was three days in length.<sup>23</sup> The intent was to screen as many people from a large pool of candidates as possible, and “select-out” the undesirable members. The first day included exercises of maximum stress conditions, from physical problems, land navigation, and obstacle courses, all performed while under duress from the harassing instructors. The next two days were focus more on a

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<sup>20</sup> Public Record Office, *SOE Syllabus*, 2001, 6. The geographic proximity of the United Kingdom played an important role in selection for the SOE. Many operators who returned from occupied territories would come back and debrief their experiences at the various Finishing Schools, providing timely intelligence on enemy tactics, the social and climate changes; the Finishing Schools could therefore adjust their selection curriculum tailored to the latest environment.

<sup>21</sup> Trice, Harrison, M. *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1993, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Hymoff, Edward. *The OSS in World War II*. New York, NY: Richardson and Steirman, 1986, 79.

<sup>23</sup> Office of Strategic Services Assessment Staff. *Assessment of Men: Selection of Personnel for the Office of Strategic Services*. New York, NY: Rinehart & Company, Inc. 1948, 12.

candidate's intelligence, or the mental and moral spheres. This three-day process provided the assessment staff with enough information to accept candidates for training.

The equivalent of Phase Two was very similar to the SOE. In this phase, the program exposed candidates to physical conditioning, land navigation skills, and long ruck marches. The instructors taught the candidates basic intelligence work, coding and decoding methods, tradecraft, demolitions, weapons and tactics, unarmed combatives, and silent killing. The OSS used various schools teaching the same techniques due to the large number of candidates that assessed.<sup>24</sup>

Phase Three consisted of the advanced skills, or the equivalent of the finishing schools from the SOE. The S&T assessment staff placed candidates into different tracks based on individual's strengths.<sup>25</sup> The training track lined up with the OSS' organizational branches: Secret Intelligence, Special Operations, Counterintelligence, Morale Operations, Operational Groups, Maritime Units, and Foreign Nationalities. Even though staff placed the candidates into selective tracks to become experts in their tradecraft, they all received exposure to methods of different forms of irregular warfare. Upon completion of Phase Three candidates would enter parachute training at various schools, usually at Ft. Benning, Georgia.<sup>26</sup> Like the selection for the SOE, there was no culminating exercise or graduation as mentioned in Phase Four in Chapter 3; the new operator's final exam was in combat.

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<sup>24</sup> Hymoff, Edward. *The OSS in World War II*. New York, NY: Richardson and Steirman, 1986, 80.

<sup>25</sup> Chambers II, Dr. John Whiteclay. *Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II: Training for War and Espionage*. Studies in Intelligence Vol. 54, No. 2 (June 2010), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Chambers, *OSS: Training for War*. June 2010, 10.

### **Differences in SOE and OSS Selection**

How the organizations recruited their candidates were subtly different, based on important considerations in each country. As the British were engaged in the war much earlier than the United States, from 1939 as opposed to late 1941, its treasury had been drastically drained. Fiscal considerations were of great concern to British decision makers, and this in turn influenced their recruiting methods of female special operators. Because of these considerations, the British used the method of reverse selection, the concept that it is easier and more cost-effective to train a candidate who is more likely to be successful by eliminating the undesired candidates in the beginning of assessment and selection as described in Chapter 3. The OSS, in contrast, initially recruited significantly larger numbers of female candidates as financial issues were not as pressing at the time in the United States.

The SOE and the OSS recruited personnel based on specific expertise that was necessary for the organizations. This expertise included academic specialization, intimate knowledge of distant lands and their people, climate, terrain, politics, and industries. Recruitment for the SOE was very much like that of an exclusive club, based largely on personal connection or invitation. As one historian put it, entry into SOE was a matter of: "It's not what you know but whom you know that matters."<sup>27</sup> As the OSS was in its infancy, many of the candidates in the OSS were "by-name" requested through friends and loosely acquainted members in the organizations.<sup>28</sup> While the OSS attempted to accept

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<sup>27</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*, 2000, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 1986, 78. As Hymoff further explains, some applicants, without much to offer or knowledge of the OSS, managed to slip through the door in the first year, and some, with connections in high places, were granted commissions and then did nothing but travel around the world with Class A priority at government expense. Excerpt from Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, *Sub Rosa*, p.23.

members into the unit based on associations and friendships, the method did not work out as well as it had for the SOE.<sup>29</sup>

Another difference that greatly affected selection methods of the organizations was the population of each of their respective countries. The 1940 the United States had 132 million citizens,<sup>30</sup> whereas the entire United Kingdom had less than one-third that number: 43 million.<sup>31</sup> The OSS had a much larger population of candidates to draw from and therefore they pushed hundreds of prospective candidates through the three-day initial selection program. At the height of its process, approximately 450 candidates per month would pass through the OSS selection.<sup>32</sup> The UK, in contrast, had an advantage over the US in terms of recruiting personnel. The war and the proximity of the UK to Europe meant the country had a vast pool of refugees from which it could recruit, many of whom had vast knowledge of and linguistic fluency in their home countries. To the detriment of the United States, which also had a large pool of foreigners, one had to be a US citizen before they could join the armed forces, severely limiting their own pool of candidates.<sup>33</sup>

A key to the initial success of the SOE, compared to the OSS, was its access to strategic intelligence from both SIS and the security service,

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<sup>29</sup> The SOE was treated like an exclusive club, and by-name-requests were common but there had to be a reputation associated with the candidate for acceptance. Still in its infancy, the OSS needed the numbers, and initially accepted candidates based on loose friendships and acquaintances with no real regard for resumes' and reputation.

<sup>30</sup> Trading Economics. *United States Population: 1900-2015*. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/population>.

<sup>31</sup> BBC News. *11 Things We Learned from the Scottish 2011 Census*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-20754751>. Attached population graph located at: [http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/64810000/gif/\\_64810704\\_population\\_compared\\_census\\_464.gif](http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/64810000/gif/_64810704_population_compared_census_464.gif). The United Kingdom from 1939-1945 did not have an accurate account of their census due to World War II, and therefore 43 million citizens is an estimation based off of author's interpretation of available graphics.

<sup>32</sup> OSS Assessment Staff. *Assessment of Men*, 1948, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 1986, 360. The OSS did often recruit foreign and first-generation Americans that were familiar with their language, people, and territory of their respective lands of origin, although there were further hurdles on granting them citizenship and security clearances.

MI5. Both organizations had grown from decades of experience formalizing their processes and procedures, and therefore SOE had access to government personnel who spoke many of the target languages.<sup>34</sup> The OSS on the other hand, stumbled frequently during its initial attempt to conduct screening and selection as its psychologists mostly spoke English only, which inhibited their ability to assess if a first-generation American recruit was fluent enough in their native tongue to be a good operator.<sup>35</sup>

A primary advantage SOE had over the OSS was geographical—the proximity of Great Britain to continental Europe. Ironically, as the threat of invasion became a possibility to Great Britain (to include aerial bombardment by the Luftwaffe), organizations such as the SOE saw an influx of patriotic candidates willing to fight the Germans by any means. Separated by oceans, the OSS was 7,000 miles away from the primary combat theaters. Geography also complicated the ability of the OSS to assess its candidates. To deal with the sudden influx on candidates, the OSS had selection stations on opposite coasts, with one in California and the other in Virginia. Once selected, candidates would train in their tradecraft for a few months before they could go overseas. Geographic proximity also worked in the SOE's favor. SOE special operators either could parachute or land by aircraft into France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Poland within minutes to hours, or motor across the English Channel to France in under an hour.<sup>36</sup> OSS operators, in contrast, took steamships across the Atlantic Ocean or traveled by

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<sup>34</sup> The British government had a much larger pool of psychiatrist and psychologists who could speak native languages of their refugee candidates' native languages.

<sup>35</sup> OSS Assessment Staff. *Assessment of Men*, 1948, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*, 2000, 64. The SOE had a variety of watercraft at their disposal. By mid-winter of 1943/44, they received some faster craft from the Royal Navy, including three 28-knot motor torpedo boats (MTBs) that could cut across the Channel within an hour. The SOE also used fishing vessels and trawlers, to blend in with local commercial vessels, although these averaged around 7-knots per hour.



aircraft to Great Britain. Only after they linked up with the OSS London field office could operators then infiltrate into occupied territory.

The selection program of the OSS was not foolproof. Some unsuitable candidates managed to slip through the selection processes, and therefore the OSS established a clear and urgent need to develop concrete screening methods to ensure that there would be fewer mental “crack-ups.” By 1943, the OSS developed a selection program borrowed from the British Army that used psychological and psychiatric evaluations to determine if a candidate is of commissioned quality.<sup>37</sup> During the next two years (1943-1945), the OSS tested 5,391 candidates using the new selection process. This adaptation significantly changed the criteria and quality of those operators that could work behind enemy lines.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Women of the SOE**

The SOE selected women special operators primarily for their ability to blend into the population of their native countries. Most female SOE operators were fluent in two or more languages and many were born in their respective country or were first-generation immigrants to the UK.<sup>39</sup>

The SOE never trained women to be commando, or surgical strike operators physically conditioned to perform high-risk, high-payoff raids

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<sup>37</sup> Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 1986, 80. The British selection board had used this method for testing its candidates to determine if they worthy of receiving a commission in their army.

<sup>38</sup> Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 1986, 82. Twenty-five percent of those recruits were accepted into the dangerous behind-enemy-lines missions throughout the world. Out of all of the recruits who went through the new selection process, only two men experienced emotional breakdowns.

<sup>39</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*, 2000, 51-53. The ability to “blend’ for OSS and SOE operators provided a decisive advantage above the Germans. Blending was the ability to use language and culture skills as in occupied territories in an effort not to draw attention to oneself and his or her activities. For those agents who were born in these occupied territories, the skill to blend was second nature. Other agents worked at developing accents and learning the cultural norms of the local area before entering the villages.



into enemy territory.<sup>40</sup> SOE training for female operators instead focused more on the special warfare missions in enemy-occupied territory, such as unconventional warfare and special reconnaissance described in the preceding chapter. As one female SOE instructor states, “During training, we attempted to prepare them physically, building up their stamina by hikes through rough countryside. All were taught close combat, which gave them confidence even if most were not very good at it. These girls were not commando material. They did not have a physique though some had tremendous mental stamina. You would not expect all of these girls to go up behind someone and slit their throats, though if they were grappled with, there were several particularly nasty little tricks that we handed on, given to us by the Shanghai police.”<sup>41</sup>

The example of one female SOE operator, Christina Granville, illustrates the level of mental and physical stamina necessary to be a successful operator in special warfare missions. Granville was the one of the longest serving and most successful of all SOE’s women agents. By all accounts, she was outstandingly brave, incredibly resourceful, as well as exceptionally charming. She had a finely honed intuition, or “sixth sense,” which repeatedly enabled her to extract herself from acute danger. Granville’s extraordinary stamina and agility allowed her to survive even the most extreme physical challenges. On a numerous occasions, she crossed the Tatra Mountains and led partisans in and out of Poland in deep winter snow. She even made the trip solo whenever necessary, a feat few men could do. On one occasion, after being captured, Granville was subjected to a brutal Gestapo interrogation where she endured their abuse yet disclosed no valuable information. Even after the interrogation and torture, she was able to talk her captors

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<sup>40</sup> At the time in World War II, the term commando meant a direct-action, specially trained and equipped soldier, like that of the SAS, or US Army Ranger. Its meaning has blurred since World War II.

<sup>41</sup> Binney, Marcus. *The Women Who Lived for Danger: The Agents of the Special Operations Executive*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2002, 7.

into releasing her.<sup>42</sup> On 7 July 1944, she participated in one of her most important missions during the war. Her aircraft launched from Algiers and she parachuted into Italy. Upon landing, she seriously injured her hip, but kept on with her mission of an attempt to subvert Axis troops guarding the Alpine passes in Italy. Granville's mission, which was ultimately successful, would lead to the codification of a new tactic for the SOE on the subversion of enemy troops.<sup>43</sup>

Another example of a successful SOE female special operator was Cecile Pearl Witherington (née Cornioley). Witherington exhibits a number of other qualities of a successful special operator, namely flexibility and leadership. Upon arriving into occupied France, she faced immediate hurdles in trying to put her SOE training to use by giving the French guerrillas, or Maquis, demolition instruction. Her biggest hurdle was trying to master the technical terms of demolitions in French, although all of specialized training had been in English. Another hurdle she faced was sexism among the guerrillas she was sent to train. When debriefed back in London, her supervisor observed that, "The fact that the informant (Pearl) was a woman was at times a handicap, the French group would have preferred a man to instruct them."<sup>44</sup>

Witherington had parachuted under the cover of darkness into German-occupied France in September 1943 to support the STATIONER circuit under the command of Maurice Southgate. She spent months couriering messages, surveying drop zones, sending encrypted messages, and coordinated the resupply of weapons, munitions, and money for the resistance network. Southgate was identified and arrested in May 1944, a mere month before the Allied invasion of France. Witherington could have immediately "gone to ground" in an attempt to preserve her own life. She instead asserted control over the remnants of the STATIONER circuit

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<sup>42</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 49-50.

<sup>43</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 80-81.

<sup>44</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 198.

and kept it functioning effectively.<sup>45</sup> As a result of her leadership, courage, and effectiveness, SOE leaders promoted her and supported her leadership of the new WRESTLER circuit. This new circuit, operating primarily in the Indre department, would grow to include approximately 3,500 Maquis under her command. Prior to an after Allied forces landed in Normandy, Witherington's WRESTLER circuit would conduct a ferocious unconventional warfare campaign, in which its guerrillas killed over 1,000 Germans and captured over 18,000 prisoners.<sup>46</sup> Her reputation and effectiveness as an unconventional warfare leader led the leaders of German security forces in France to place a sizeable bounty for her capture or death.<sup>47</sup>

As with some male operators, not all of the female operators were successful. For her bravery, Noor Inayat Khan was posthumously awarded the George Cross. During her selection and after her death, however, there was some speculation Khan was not suitable special operations material. In late 1942, she was recruited to join SOE as a radio operator. Some of those who trained and operated with her, however, were not confident in her abilities. Her SOE training handlers claimed she was a bit naïve, displayed frequent lapses in basic security, had an inability to tell a lie, and was a potential threat to her own safety and the safety of her network.<sup>48</sup> Despite these reservations, however, Khan flew into France where she worked in the PROSPER resistance network. Most of the PROSPER network, however, were arrested soon after her arrival.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*, 2000, 47, 122, 381-382.

<sup>46</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 199.

<sup>47</sup> Other noteworthy SOE special operators included Vera Atkins, Violette Szabo, Odette Sanson, and Nancy Wake. An incomplete listing of female SOE agents is available online at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_female\\_SOE\\_agents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_female_SOE_agents).

<sup>48</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 157.

<sup>49</sup> BBC History. Noor Inayat Khan: 1914-1944. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/inayat\\_khan\\_noor.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/inayat_khan_noor.shtml).

Khan was eventually betrayed by a Frenchwoman and arrested by the Gestapo. The Gestapo was able to use her radio to trick the SOE into sending more agents directly into the hands of the Germans. Against standard operating procedures and her training, Khan had unwisely kept a copy of all the secret messages enabling the Gestapo to identify members of and dismantle the PROSPER network. In September 1943, Khan and three other female SOE agents were executed at the Dachau concentration camp.<sup>50</sup> One reason Khan was posthumously decorated was the absence of evidence that she refused to give up any information during her confinement and torture.

Operational necessity, in the form of supporting resistance movements, led senior British political and military leaders to authorize the use of female operators. SOE, for its part, assumed risk by deploying women operators into occupied territory. The prevailing social and political context of the day, however, relegated a number of women to supporting roles as couriers and radio operators. However, when women were given the chance to lead, they performed valiantly with the tools and skills developed at the SOE selection schools. For these fearless women of SOE, their Phase Four (the culmination exercise) was usually their first parachute drop into enemy territory.

### **The Women of the OSS**

Few operators had a diverse background, or were as daring, as Virginia Hall. Hall's background included working for the SOE before she joined the OSS. After selection as an OSS operator, and despite the fact she was handicapped with an artificial leg, she trained specifically in security tactics. The nature of her training, combined with her operational location, meant she was constantly in motion in the weeks

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<sup>50</sup> BBC History. Noor Inayat Khan: 1914-1944. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/inayat\\_khan\\_noor.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/inayat_khan_noor.shtml).

prior to the D-Day invasion. Hired as a farm hand in Creuse, France, Hall cooked for the farmer, tended to his animals, and in the process was able to identify and establish several significant drop zones for the invasion.<sup>51</sup> After the invasion of Europe, once she linked up with an OSS Jedburgh team, Hall began organizing, arming, and training three battalions of French Maquis resistance fighters.<sup>52</sup> These battalions would later take part in large-scale sabotage and ambush operations against the retreating Germans. Hall was able to pass intelligence daily, by radio, on the local conditions, harass and target the retreating enemy, and destroy their vital lines of communications.<sup>53</sup> As with Witherington, Hall's activities during World War II clearly fall under the umbrella of what we would call special warfare today. She was able to use both her training, operational skills, and gender to blend into the environment, form a sizeable force, and attack the enemy at the time and place of her choosing.

Another OSS operator equally daring to Hall was Lt. Jeanette Guyot. Employed in a similar special warfare role against the Germans, Guyot would eventually receive the Distinguished Service Cross. Guyot parachuted at night, wearing civilian clothes, into enemy-occupied France as part of an OSS Sussex team, who were elite Pathfinders in a mission traditionally reserved for specially selected men. The Pathfinder mission consists of a forward reconnaissance element dropped in advance of a main force to survey drop zones for clandestine parachute drops or even large-scale airborne divisions and glider landing zones.

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<sup>51</sup> McIntosh, Elizabeth P. *The Women of the OSS: Sisterhood of Spies*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998, 120.

<sup>52</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*, 2000, 246. The Jedburgh teams were three-man Allied teams, international in the full sense of the word, which would parachute into France immediately before and after D-Day to organize resistance and supervise the delivery of arms to the guerrilla forces. Composed of one American, one Frenchman, and one Englishman. A total of 93 three-man teams were inserted, and they sustained 21 casualties.

<sup>53</sup> McIntosh, *The Women of the OSS*, 1998, 123.

Guyot surveyed the drop zones, organized the reception committees for those forces, and arranged safe houses for them.<sup>54</sup>

Despite possessing formidable capabilities, women special operators met with mixed reactions in the OSS from their male counterparts. One reaction echoed today in the debate over women in combat units. Some men insisted women, regardless of the gallantry and dedication, created an intolerable obstacle to discipline by their very presence. In other words, men might be distracted from the mission or put more energy into their relationships with women than focus on their training. Another reaction was more subtle in its misogyny. For example, a male officer pointed out that great care was necessary when selecting women for duty in the Southeast Asia Command, that the women must be healthy, able, have a degree of sophistication, and the ability to cope with the unusual situations they will find themselves when serving in Colombo, Ceylon.<sup>55</sup>

Others within OSS were more accepting of female special operators. One of the commanders of OSS' X-2 Operations in France and Spain, with the mission of counterintelligence, spoke highly of women special operators and his integrated team. Roger Goiran exclaimed, "the people assembled by Donovan were dedicated, excited; their work transcended any previous experience. This was true of the men and women who worked to the maximum of their capabilities. We were well integrated."<sup>56</sup> Such reactions, however, were in the minority in the OSS. As a result, far fewer women served in roles as special operators in the field in the OSS, with the vast majority confined to administrative and support duties, than they did in the SOE.

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<sup>54</sup> McIntosh, *The Women of the OSS*, 1998, 144.

<sup>55</sup> Ceylon is now Sri Lanka. The OSS had operators in Europe, Africa, Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific.

<sup>56</sup> McIntosh, *The Women of the OSS*, 1998, 145.



## Conclusion

Leila Rupp, in her book on the mobilization of women for war, claimed that the adaptation of public images to the demands of war allowed the American public to accept the employment of women in “unwomanly” occupations without challenging basic ideas about “woman’s place.”<sup>57</sup> This view, possibly held by the majority of the public during this time, did not hinder the creativity of the leadership in the SOE and OSS. World War II not only had a different character from previous wars, it also seemed to have its own norms and codes of conduct. In addition to large-scale indiscriminate killing on and off the battlefield, World War II saw the use of various forms of special operations unprecedented in type, degree, and scale. The United Kingdom and the United States formed new organizations to counter the threat by using clandestine operators employing special warfare means to disrupt and destroy the enemy. Their successful and precise use of female operators gave them a distinct advantage against the enemy. Selected for their courage, intelligence, resourcefulness, decision-making skills, mental stamina, agility, and physical abilities, these women had the same attributes used for selecting the male operators. Women never had a role such as this on such a scale, and yet again, they surprised their comrades with their astonishing mastery of clandestine life.<sup>58</sup> One difference from their male counterparts is that the women did not stand out as much in occupied territories, yet they were just trainable, and when necessary, just as lethal as the men.

The following case study in Chapter 6 describes the use of women in the UK’s attempt to capture IRA (Irish Republican Army) and criminal elements in Northern Ireland. In another example of indiscriminant

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<sup>57</sup> Rupp, Leila J. *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, 181.

<sup>58</sup> Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, 2002, 337.



warfare, the British adopted radical means and creatively developed a new organization to counter the threat.



## Chapter 6

### **Case Study #2: The Special Air Service (SAS) and 14 Intelligence Company (14 IC) in Northern Ireland**

*Things will never be right, can never be right, while this ultimate source of hatred and division continues. Britain has never brought freedom, never brought peace, never brought justice or respect for humanity to Ireland. Everybody knows that what British power has brought has been war and strife, slavery and servility, shame and disgrace and cruelty.*

*-Eira Nua, Provincial Sinn Fein Journal, 1977*

The previous chapter focused on the demand, based on the military operational need, for allowing women to serve as special operators in the SOE and OSS in occupied countries during World War II. This chapter examines a military operational need for female special operators three decades after the end of that war. Rather than during an existential crisis, for the survival of the state, this case study involves looks at conflict within a state in a limited war. During the conflict in Northern Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom allowed women to serve as special operators in both the 14 Intelligence Company (14 IC) and 22 Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment against violent extremist and criminal elements.<sup>1</sup> This chapter also outlines operational necessity as the driving factor for the use of women in contested areas, but in a different way: gaining access and information in certain locales where highly skilled men could not or could not alone. The case study of the use of women special operators in Northern Ireland is both similar to and

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<sup>1</sup> The conflict in Northern Ireland had many factions and splinter groups. The most notorious ones were the IRA (Irish Republican Army), the PIRA (Provincial Irish Republican Army), the Ulster Defence Association (UDF) and Ulster Volunteer Forces (UVF) of Northern Ireland. Some historians have tied Sinn Fein as a terrorist organization with the IRA, but to this day, they claim their innocence and act only as a political wing.

different from the case of the SOE and OSS, in that the British Ministry of Defence created a highly specialized special operations unit, the 14IC, due to the nature of the conflict. In addition, the Northern Ireland case study touches upon some of the issues associated with integrating women into a well-established special operations unit, 22 SAS, which had tried and tested selection criteria, a storied history, and a unique organizational culture.

The conflict in Northern Ireland is complex, with deep roots, that has described and analyzed in hundreds of articles and books. As one expert explains the complexity in his own terms, “von Clausewitz wrote that ‘war is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means,’ but here the Irish have reversed the doctrine. In a land of gunmen it is the soldier who calls the shots, not the politician.”<sup>2</sup> To keep the examination of the conflict manageable, within the confines of this thesis, this chapter only explores it at the basic level between the British Government (Ministry of Defence) against the violent extremists and criminal elements in Northern Ireland.

### **Origins for a 300-Year Conflict**

The conflict in Ireland has long and complicated roots. Some historians analyzed the origins of the Northern Ireland conflict through a religious lens between the Catholics and the Protestants, but religion is only catalyst for the conflict. Other authors have attempted to define sides by political agenda between “Unionists versus Nationalists,” or between “settlers and natives.” The Unionists are more likely to be Protestant, and prefer to have Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom. The Ulster Defence Force (UDF) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) are both Unionists, and their operations were relatively

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<sup>2</sup> Geraghty, Tony, *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict between the IRA and British Intelligence*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, xiii.

amateurish, and more often criminal in nature, when compared to the technical skills and complex organization and operations of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA).<sup>3</sup> Nationalists are more likely to be Catholic and favor a united Ireland, together with the Republic of Ireland (Éire), free from British authority and rule.<sup>4</sup> Both the IRA and the PIRA fall under the category of “Nationalists.” This chapter will not reduce the backgrounds of conflict, but pieces all religious, political, patriotic, and ideological variables together and then focuses on the armed groups in this complex conflict.

Although many believe that the violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the beginning of the conflict, the origins trace themselves back to 1691. In that year, the nationally-organized resistance by the professional Irish armies against English rule ended after the Battle of the Boyne and the Battle of Aughrim.<sup>5</sup> Over the next 300 years, numerous movements, both peaceful and violent, etched themselves into Ireland’s history. The armed factions of the organizations have tried all manners of violence, from political protest through armed insurrection, but after World War II they used methods more along the lines of terrorism, including violence against unarmed civilians, government officials, and armed troops of each side to advance their political agenda.<sup>6</sup> The terrorist tactics of ambushes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) found on today’s battlefield trace their modern origins, in terms of technical proficiency

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<sup>3</sup> Rennie, James. *The Operators: On the Streets with 14 Company: The Army’s Top Secret Elite*. London, UK: Century Publishing, 1996, 191.

<sup>4</sup> Neumann, Peter R., *Britain’s Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict, 1969-98*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 2000, xxii.

<sup>6</sup> Holland, Jack and Susan Phoenix, *Phoenix: Policing the Shadows- The Secret War Against Terrorism in Northern Ireland*. London, UK: Hodder and Stroughton, 1996, 82-106. In Ian Phoenix’s accounts, there were many splinter organizations and criminal elements intertwined with the PIRA, IRA, INLA (Irish National Liberation Army), UVF, UDA, UDF, UFF, etc. 108. There were also numerous surveillance operations uncovering detailed collusion between the Unionists and the Nationalists, again adding more complexity to the conflict.

and complexity, to expert development and use in the Northern Ireland conflict.<sup>7</sup>

From the late 1700's through the mid 1800's, France attempted to invade Ireland numerous times, determined to unseat the British rule over the island and restore a Catholic monarch to the throne. The French never succeeded. The Act of the Union in 1801 abolished the Irish Parliament in Dublin, a final attempt to uphold the British connection and sustain Protestant supremacy.<sup>8</sup> In the late 1850's, in an attempt to challenge British control, a number of Irish banded together to establish the Fenian Brotherhood. The Fenians gained support both near and far, within the Irish diaspora community in the United States as well as a foothold within Ireland itself. The Fenians staged an unsuccessful revolt in Ireland in 1867 and initiated isolated revolutionary acts against the British until the early 20th century, when the movement was eclipsed by the more radical and revolutionary IRA.<sup>9</sup> In 1868, Protestant leader Thomas Ellis declared war on the Fenians claiming that they will fight the Fenians "with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other."<sup>10</sup>

Before World War I began in 1914, the Unionists created the UVF, which the Nationalists immediately countered with the creation of the Irish Volunteers. Formalized violence between the two communities in the modern era could be said to have begun at this moment, although

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<sup>7</sup> Defence Industry Reports, *Special Reports- C-IED: IEDs- Learning from History*. Online at <http://www.defenceindustryreports.com>. Accessed on 10 April 2015. The complexity and technical sophistication used by the PIRA against the British government included anti-handling switches, wire-detonation, remote control and radio-code based arming for use against British anti-jamming devices. For further details see A.R. Oppenheimer, *IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets, A History of Deadly Ingenuity* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 2003, 11.

<sup>9</sup> In 1867, members of the Fenian Brotherhood attempted to invade Canada from upstate New York. The short-lived series of raids were quickly quashed. A short description of the so-called "Fenian Raids" is available from the Niagara Museum of History. Deepa Parakh, "The Fenian Raids—1866," (1997), available online at <https://niagarafallsmuseums.ca/pdf/The-Fenian-Raids-1866.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 2000, 364.

thousands of Irishmen volunteered to serve in the British Army during “The Great War.”<sup>11</sup> British and Irish tensions, however, were heightened during the war as a result of the abortive “Easter Rising” (22-29 April 1916) and the harsh British measures used to put the rebellion down. After World War I, an Irish Civil War (1922-1923) led to the creation of the Irish Free State in the south of the island. Between 1922 and 1969, however, there were numerous attempts at political referendums, movements, and uprisings by the remaining Catholic population in the British-held section of the north to secede from Britain, as well as the forming, reforming, and splintering of factions within the IRA.

After 1969 and to the 1998 ceasefire, violence within Northern Ireland increased in intensity. Outside support to unsettle the British Government came from unlikely allies. In an effort to punish British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for her role in supporting the United States during Operation ELDORADO CANYON in 1986, during which American F-111s bombed Tripoli, Libya shipped close to 120 tons of weapons and munitions to the PIRA.<sup>12</sup> A drastic increase of violence in 1986 and 1987 accompanied the arrival in PIRA hands of over 1,000 AKM assault rifles, a dozen surface-to-air missiles, and 4 tons of a Czech plastic explosive, Semtex.<sup>13</sup> Other munitions and support for the PIRA came from sources closer to home: the Irish population and sympathizers within the United States.

### **The British Response to the PIRA**

The increasing sophistication of various terrorist groups in worldwide as well as in Northern Ireland posed a growing threat to Britain, one that could only be countered using advanced methods of

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<sup>11</sup> Geraghty, *The Irish War*, 2000, 365.

<sup>12</sup> For details, see Joseph Stanik, *El Dorado Canyon: Reagan's Undeclared War with Qaddafi* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Holland and Phoenix, *Phoenix*, 1996, 134.

their own. Senior leaders within the British Ministry of Defence placed a great deal of importance on intelligence gathering and dissemination, and the creation, organization, and the training of elite counter-terrorist forces. They established the requirement of forward basing of such forces during international incidents and prolonged conflict as the pre-crisis cooperation between countries is paramount.<sup>14</sup> British regular army forces, along with 22 SAS counter-terrorism specialists from the unit's Counter-Revolutionary Wing, deployed to remove the hardline criminals and terrorists. To use the SAS most effectively, the British Army decided to create a specialized unit that could find, observe, and gather intelligence. The intelligence gathered would find and fix the targets, and in conjunction with the SAS or the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), they would finish the operation.<sup>15</sup> The unit was the 14 IC, and it was the answer to a specific operational requirement.

The specific operational requirement driving the creation of the 14 IC was the need to conduct Close Target Reconnaissance (CTR) in the major cities and towns in which the IRA operated. Attempts to use 22 SAS for CTR missions had mixed success, largely because teams of men, in some cases identifiable by their haircuts and clothes were too conspicuous.<sup>16</sup> The 14 IC officially "stood up," or was first established in 1974, in the wake of the disbanding of the controversial Mobile Reconnaissance Force.<sup>17</sup> Half of the 22 SAS' B Squadron, combined with members of the intelligence community, comprised the initial cadre of 14

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<sup>14</sup> Taillon, J. Paul de B. *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism: The British and American Experiences*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001, xi.

<sup>15</sup> The find, fix and finish method allows special surveillance teams the ability to locate known criminals and terrorists. The fix phase allows the surveillance team the opportunity to develop a "pattern-of-life" model; i.e. the daily movements and stoppages of individuals. The finish portion is the capture/kill phase of the operation.

<sup>16</sup> Rennie, *The Operators*, 1996, 200.

<sup>17</sup> For a brief description of the Mobile Reconnaissance Force and its controversy, see Mark Urban, *Big Boys' Rules: The Secret Struggle against the IRA* (London: BCA, 1992), 35-38.



IC forces.<sup>18</sup> This hybrid organization quickly gained a reputation for its superior performance and effectiveness. The unit's performance and effectiveness was due, in part, to the skills former SAS members taught its intelligence operatives including engaging the enemy in urban and close quarter battle (CQB), physical conditioning, hand-to-hand combat, and advanced driving techniques. Likewise, the former intelligence operators taught SAS operators how to collect intelligence over extended periods without being discovered, operate technical surveillance equipment, and conduct sensor emplacement. One characteristic that differentiated the 14 IC from other UK SOF units was that it actively recruited women on an equal basis with men. Within 14 IC there was only one standard during selection regardless of gender. For reasons that will become clear, it was an exceptional honor to pass selection in 14 IC.<sup>19</sup>

### **Selection Processes of the SAS and 14 Intelligence Company**

The UK SOF selection programs can derive their roots from the initial selection program of the British SOE and SAS established during World War II. Widely recognized as the standard for SOF selection worldwide, due to its difficulty, the SAS selection process seeks out certain criteria in the moral, mental, and physical domains. The SAS method of selection focuses on the three domains, and follows the general formula described in detail in Chapter 3 with great emphasis placed on the physical and moral domains. In Phase Two of SAS selection, the candidates are subjected to many skills tests, mental acuity drills, and a daily physical schedule. Phase Two culminates with a capstone exercise, as do most SOF selection processes, simply called

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<sup>18</sup> To put this in context, 22 SAS is comprised of four "Sabre" Squadrons: A, B, C, and G. Each Sabre is comprised of four troops of 15 men, with each troop focused on a geographic specialty (air, mobility, mountain, and water).

<sup>19</sup> Ford, Sarah. *One Up: A Woman in Action with the SAS*. London, UK: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, 18.

“Endurance” which involves a 22-hour maximum ruck march of 40 miles through the Welsh mountains.<sup>20</sup>

After completing Phase Two, candidates enter the Phase Three consisting of basic and advanced skills training. As with most SOF selection programs, the SAS selection portion is still not complete as close to 50 percent of candidates will be eliminated. Candidates will master weapons and tactics, driving courses, unarmed combatives, demolition, medical, and environmental training.<sup>21</sup> Phase Four of selection ends with a final field training exercise and the placement of a new operator onto the teams.

The selection process for the 14 IC came about differently; the British Army established the organization to perform a wartime mission and then the members of the unit designed the process for selection. The initial 14 IC stood up in 1974 with experienced intelligence operators and SAS troops. The successes and failures on operational missions in Northern Ireland drove the unit to develop a selection process. The 14 IC specializes in the clandestine ability to conduct tactical and technical reconnaissance in all environments.

Whereas some SOF selection programs, such as 22 SAS, emphasize the physical domain, 14 IC selection places a premium on the mental and moral domain given the nature of the CTR mission and the characteristics of operating in heavily-populated urban environments. Prospective candidates receive limited knowledge throughout their selection as training cadre test the candidate’s ability to think and adapt under duress in uncertain situations. The different training domain focus between 14 IC and 22 SAS is due, in part, to the different nature of their missions. Selection pushes the 14 IC candidates beyond their

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<sup>20</sup> SAS Special Air Service. The SAS – Selection. 2012. <http://www.sasspecialair service.com/sas-selection-enlisting-process.html>

<sup>21</sup> SAS, The SAS – Selection. 2012. <http://www.sasspecialair service.com/sas-selection-enlisting-process.html>.

physical limits, as physical exhaustion allows the cadre to evaluate the candidate's decision-making abilities and awareness of their surroundings—in other words, to test their abilities in the moral and mental domains.

Phase Two of 14 IC selection is similar to that of the SAS, except that instead of designing an assaulter, the process looks to eliminate anyone without the necessary qualities to deal with the unique challenges of life as a an undercover operative. Emphasized in 14 IC selection are candidates with exceptional observational abilities, stamina, and the ability to think under stress. Just like the SAS, the candidates are subjected to ruck marches, daily physical training and conditioning, and land navigation skills. Should they complete Phase Two, the candidates move onto advanced driving courses, photography, surveillance techniques, weapons and tactics, unarmed combatives, communications, and observation post and hide site selection and discipline.<sup>22</sup>

Both the 14 IC and 22 SAS diverge in terms of their emphasis of their respective missions, cultural mindset, and selection criteria. The SAS selection and mission set largely, but not exclusively, parallels that of American units which conduct surgical strike missions described in Chapter 4. 14 IC selection and mission sets, in contrast, more closely resemble those of American special warfare missions. The SAS operator tends to be older and more experienced, extremely capable in physical strength and endurance, with a training emphasis on skills repetition and peak performance in close-quarters battle, shooting, and tactical driving. SAS troops and teams place a premium on extensive pre-mission rehearsals of tactics, techniques, and procedures proven in combat. The 14 IC training, in contrast, focused on long duration special

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<sup>22</sup> Elite UK Forces. *14th Intelligence Company - The Det.* <http://www.eliteukforces.info/the-det>.

reconnaissance activities in uncertain environments that require creativity, imagination, focus, intellectual precision, and high levels of patience. The 14 IC operators are also mature, but focus on technical skills development, including close target reconnaissance (CTR—shadowing and trailing persons of interest), intelligence gathering, surreptitious entry, and gaining access to hostile and denied areas without being discovered. SAS missions are often short-duration raids or strikes, based on speed, surprise, and violence of action, the cornerstones of surgical strike missions. The 14 IC missions, in contrast, are longer in duration, conducted with extreme patience through technical surveillance and stakeouts, more in line with special warfare missions, and only rarely results in the use of lethal force or constabulary arrests more characteristic of surgical strike missions.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Female Operators of 14 IC: Jackie George and Sarah Ford**

As in the preceding case study chapter, this one also draws upon specific vignettes. The vignettes focus on two female operators of the 14 IC in their support of operations in Northern Ireland.<sup>24</sup> Jackie George and Sarah Ford were among the first women to successfully complete the rigors of UKSOF selection with 14 IC and operate in Northern Ireland. On a few surveillance missions, the 14 IC employed the women alongside male counterparts using the cover story as “newlyweds” touring Ireland in order to infiltrate certain villages that their male counterparts

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<sup>23</sup> The 14 IC operators could find, fix, and finish targets. To finish the target individual(s), the operators could use lethal force if the mission dictated, employ an SAS team with numerous assaulters if the threat warranted their use, and use the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to administer the arrest(s).

<sup>24</sup> In keeping with the premium the British place on operational secrecy, but also because of a “gag order” punishing the disclosure of SOF mission or unit specifics the late 1990s under the Official Secrets Act (1989), many details of British special forces operations and activities in Northern Ireland remain classified. This section places heavy emphasis on the few first-hand accounts by operators published prior to issuance of the gag order.

operating alone, could not.<sup>25</sup> Former unit member James Rennie reinforces this claim of using combined CTR teams by stating:

This easy ability to appear ordinary was our greatest strength. Some of the areas, particularly the hamlets, were so aware of potential security force surveillance that we would not drive through two up (two people in a car) unless one of them was a girl. One person alone, or one man and a woman, attract much less interest than two men together. It's usually a bit cliché to say that everyone knows everyone else's business in a small community, but in the border areas of Ulster, it is quite literally true. In addition to terrorist activity, there is a widespread smuggling across the border, which is effectively unpoliced. Two men in a car, unless they are recognized, stand out as potential police or army. Again, this brought home to us all the value of female operators.<sup>26</sup>

The 14 IC recruited both George and Ford (as well as numerous other women) based on their excellent performance records within the Army as well as recommendations from superior officers. Once 14 IC selects a candidate, it is important to note that the selection process did not differentiate between men and women in terms of the standards.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, and perhaps of note to American special operations units as they review their selection processes to open them up to women, if none of the women had passed the rigorous selection course for 14 IC then the unit's operations would have continued at a diminished capacity and perhaps at increased operational risk of compromise.

Both George and Ford were required to pass the Phase One portion of assessment for 14 IC. This assessment included an interview with training cadre, written tests, map reading exercises, general military knowledge quizzes, as well as a physical abilities test. The initial portion of the test required the squad to run two kilometers together within 15

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<sup>25</sup> George, Jackie and Susan Ottaway, *She Who Dared: Covert Operations in Northern Ireland with the SAS*. South Yorkshire, UK: Leo Cooper Publishing, 1999, 98.

<sup>26</sup> Rennie, *The Operators*, 1996, 151.

<sup>27</sup> Ford, *One Up*, 1997, 58.

minutes, and a return run (same distance) in under 11 minutes. The next physical test was the combat fitness test, which included an eight-mile cross-country ruck march (23 kilograms, or kg) in 90 minutes, 60 sit-ups in one minute, and 60 push-ups in one minute.<sup>28</sup>

The cadre subjected the women to the same punishing physical regimen that the male candidates did. During Rennie's selection, in preparation for the third physical training (PT) session of the day, he recalls:

My heart sank when we left the classroom to change for yet another session of PT. Lying outside our block was a row of stretchers, each with a six-foot railway sleeper lashed to it. We formed up and divided into ten teams of eight, with the four remaining females dispersed around the male teams. So far the girls had done everything alongside of us, to the best of their ability, and we were full of admiration for them.<sup>29</sup>

Based on their biological differences, the female candidates had to adapt their methods to pass through the advanced skills in selection. One example is a 40 kg box lift. As Dr. Neal Baumgartner, the project lead for the US Air Force Battlefield Airman initiative explains, a male candidate would simply approach the box and pick it up, regardless of its weight, as a test of strength. Female candidates performing the same function have to get closer to the box, torso to the weight, and rely on their legs for lift. Both candidates could perform the same task, but female candidates would have to approach the task using a different mechanical stance.<sup>30</sup> Male candidates often rely on brute force on certain obstacles, whereas female candidates resort to using all available limbs as mechanical levers to propel themselves over them.

In the specific case of 14 IC selection, both Sarah Ford and Jackie George adapted their methods to meet the standards. Ford endured the

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<sup>28</sup> Ford, *One Up*, 1997, 58.

<sup>29</sup> Rennie, *The Operators*, 1996, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Baumgartner, Dr. Neal, HAF Physiologist. Interviewed by author, 12 December 2014.

long tortuous marches through the mountains carrying a rucksack with the specified heavy weight. By securing the heavy rucksack lower on her hips, she was able to use her anatomical advantage in order to better support the weight.<sup>31</sup>

Jackie George faced a similar hurdle during hand-to-hand combatives with her instructor. Combatives were important training as her life, as well as the life of her teammate, could depend on outsmarting and outfighting the opponent. But George knew she was not as strong physically as the male operators against whom she was sparring. To offset this difference in strength, female operators could use so-called “dirty” fighting techniques such as ramming your fingers into someone’s eyes or nose, biting your opponent, as well as targeting sensitive male genitalia to gain an advantage. Instructors taught the female operators these skills and evaluated on their ability to use them automatically. Any squeamishness in the field to use such skills could result in the death or capture of one or more operators.<sup>32</sup>

Both George and Ford successfully passed 14 IC selection and deployed to their posts in Northern Ireland. Their next hurdle was to break into the subculture of the 14 IC, a unit that had already seen sustained operations against IRA forces in Northern Ireland. Although both women gained a new identity by passing through selection, they had yet to prove themselves among their fellow male operators. As in most special operations units, the unit of merit is measured in the ability to perform the mission to the unit standard. Both George and Ford gained acceptance into the team’s subculture after they proved

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<sup>31</sup> As women’s bodies are anatomically different than men’s, Sarah Ford noted that with more pronounced collarbones and wearing a bra, that she endured great pain during long ruck marches creating deep welts into her shoulders. The issue of designing operator equipment exclusively fit for females is an issue USSOCOM is addressing.

<sup>32</sup> George, Jackie and Susan Ottaway, *She Who Dared: Covert Operations in Northern Ireland with the SAS*. South Yorkshire, UK: Leo Cooper Publishing, 1999, 88.



themselves in several harrowing missions, although not without resistance from some of the male operators.

Jackie George had a different experience than Ford. George states, “We knew that however well we performed there would be criticism, especially of the women. From the start, some of the men had made it clear that they hated women...thankfully, there were some men with a mature outlook who recognized the value of having women in undercover roles. Without them, our lives would have been unbearable.”<sup>33</sup> Although George’s experiences would change for the better when provided with a male counterpart who did not judge her by her gender, she left 14 IC with heartache degree of bitterness. Women, at the time, could only operate with a male partner, whereas men could work alone when conducting CTR missions from vehicles. One explanation for this is the social context described in Chapter 2. Within Britain during the 1970s it was social unacceptable to allow women to engage in these special operations, and the 14 IC leadership assumed incredible risks for sending women out on surveillance missions. As George concludes, “It seemed that however well we performed we would always be regarded as inferior beings by the Army, and by many of the male soldiers too.”<sup>34</sup>

Sarah Ford experienced a different social climate that did Ford, or perhaps she was able to cope with it successfully. Ford states, “I tried not to let my postings get to me. Maybe they did not want me, but the fact was that I’d passed the course. Now it was up to me to prove myself. My philosophy has always been to judge each individual on their own merits, and that was what the lads in the South (14 IC in Northern Ireland) would have to do with me. I reckoned that if I was good enough to pass the course, I’d be good enough for them.”<sup>35</sup> As Ford spent the next year with her team, she developed a superior rapport with them and

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<sup>33</sup> George, and Ottaway, *She Who Dared*, 1999, 109.

<sup>34</sup> George, and Ottaway, *She Who Dared*, 1999, 112.

<sup>35</sup> Ford, *One Up*, 1997, 141.

broke into the subculture with her display of tactical expertise on her first mission as she was in a helicopter providing airborne support. Providing the ground team with precise information on enemy movements and making correct tactical calls, Ford demonstrated her value to the team. She eventually developed such a reputation as a skilled operator within the 14 IC that she was allowed to conduct CTR missions “one-up,” a term for describing a highly risky form of vehicle surveillance in a hostile neighborhood by a lone operator.<sup>36</sup> It was the persistence of Ford’s requests, against the standard operating procedure of the male-female surveillance team, that she was able to operate “one-up.”<sup>37</sup> At the time of Ford was driving one-up in the vehicle, there was no legal basis within Great Britain for her to do so. Leaders within the 14 IC made an operational judgment based on mission requirements and weighed them against her skills and ability. Her reputation, built upon the numerous operations, earned the trust of her team and the leadership.<sup>38</sup> She in fact was filling an operational requirement in a mission-enhancing role, but in a legal and social context that did not see an appropriate role for women in special operations deployed operationally.

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<sup>36</sup> Ford, *One Up*, 1997, 199.

<sup>37</sup> Previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the notion of groupthink being a homogeneous, highly cohesive team that is concerned with maintaining unanimity that they fail to evaluate all their alternatives and options. Ford’s reputation built on her abilities in fighting the IRA lead to her ability to counter the standard operation procedures and their groupthink employed by 14 IC, allowing her to drive “one-up.”

<sup>38</sup> Ford, *One Up*, 1997, 200. Ford points out, “None of the lads in the A-frame [barracks] raised an eyebrow. By now, they were fully aware of how competent I was, and viewed me as their professional equal. When the original ops officer returned from leave, the experienced operators tried to make him see the light. He wavered a bit, and for the rest of the tour sometimes he let me drive one up. It felt like a small victory for womankind.”

## **Conclusion**

As the character of warfare in Northern Ireland became indiscriminant, the British designed a special organization tasked to meet the threat. This chapter illustrated a basic timeline of the problems in Northern Ireland from religious, ideological, patriotic, loyalties, political, and violent factions to show the urgent need of Britain in establishing a new unit.

The operational necessity to obtain valuable information on fleeting terrorist targets blending in with the local population drove the requirement for new capabilities within a new unit. After the Army created the unit, the cadre within the unit formed its own selection process based on previous successes and failures of operations in Northern Ireland. Blending the best elements of 22 SAS and intelligence skills and selection processes, 14 IC cadre were able to modify its basic and advanced skills tailored to those required by an undercover field agent.

While 22 SAS was on call for direct assault missions that were scarce and episodic, the 14 IC performed special warfare operations daily. The unique mission set of the 14 IC allowed women the opportunity to operate in a hostile environment by enabling and enhancing the missions when used during CTR operations. Parallel to the women of the OSS and SOE in Chapter 5, the women of 14 IC met an assessment standard established by a new organization, and then filled a highly specific operational requirement best suited to women. Last, although Jackie George and Sarah Ford had successful careers in the 14 IC, they had to overcome the hurdle of selection (both physical, moral, and mental) and master advance skills, while at the same time breaking into an organizational subculture by proving their tactical competence. Their ability to break into the organizational subculture was made somewhat easier given the nascent creation of 14 IC, whose own culture was still forming, as well as the focus on mission performance and not

unit heritage and tradition. George and Ford were able to do so given the operational necessity of their contributions to mission success, despite the fact that the social and legal context within Great Britain at the time was not amenable to their status as special operators.



## Chapter 7

### **Conclusion and Observations**

From the birthplace of women serving in the United States military in limited support roles, to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in a time when women would fly single-seat fighter aircraft and command combatant naval vessels in war, women have performed exceptionally well in a number of military roles. The four catalysts for women to achieve equality with men in the military, which appear throughout this thesis, are operational need, social acceptance, the political will of our nation, and legal authority.

Chapter 2 highlighted the catalysts, and in particular, the legal authorities that have permitted women to serve in the United States military historically. During wartime, especially in the era of total war, women filled a critical manpower void that allowed thousands of men to enter the frontline combat units. After World War II, however, women returned to normal civilian life once the Services disbanded its female volunteer forces, largely the result of prevailing social and political norms. While the 1948 Integration Act allowed women to have a permanent presence in the Department of Defense, the biggest step towards creating equality for women was the rescinding of the draft and the call for an all-volunteer force (AVF) at the end of the Vietnam War. The military actively recruited women to fill the manning voids as thousands of draftees separated from the services. After the Gulf War, changing social norms influenced politicians and lawmakers to allow women the right to serve in combat, but under the DCAR guidelines of 1994. Less than a decade later, thousands of women deployed in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, filling an operational need in roles that directly contradicted the DCAR. In 2013, the SECDEF rescinded the long standing DCAR and opened all

military occupations to women, to include entrance into special operations forces (SOF).

Chapter 3 discussed the current SOF selection process, one that uses a method of reverse selection first developed during World War II. The chapter broke down selection into its four component phases: application, physical elimination, basic and advanced skills training, and the final culminating exercise. The SOF selection process is based on high physical, mental, and moral standards that have evolved as SOF manpower and recruiting projections fluctuate and in the face of changing threats. The physical standards limit the amount of candidates who progress in training, and therefore the standards can remain higher than that of conventional forces. The chapter then focused on the organizational cultures and sub-cultures of the SOF teams endemic to and fostered by SOF selection process. Before acceptance into the organizational sub-cultures, new operators must prove their competence in exercises and on deployments.

Chapter 4 assessed the SOF missions of the services and looks at the core operations and activities. The high-risk missions of Chapter 4 reflect on the stringent standards of the SOF selection process found in Chapter 3. The USASOC model of ARSOF 2022 categorizes the traditional SOF mission areas of special warfare or surgical strike. The missions are quite distinct in nature, as this chapter demonstrated, and this nature in turn has led to the development of two distinct organizational cultures.

From the process of selection, and the foreseeable barriers that exist to the vetting and integration of female SOF operators, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 turned from the speculative into the real. In particular, these two chapters explored case studies in which two organizations selected female SOF operators and used them creatively against an enemy. The first surveyed the selection process and use of female operators in the SOE and the OSS during World War II. The SOE and

OSS trained women in the clandestine services to meet an operational wartime requirement. Although used in limited numbers, relative to their overall population, women made fine operators who proved able to infiltrate into and operate within occupied territory without raising the suspicion of the enemy. In the process, they provided extremely valuable intelligence and special warfare capabilities, including the leadership of large armed groups, in the service of their respective countries.

The second case study, in Chapter 6, reviewed the efforts of the women in the Special Air Service (SAS) and the 14 Intelligence Company (14 IC) fighting against terrorist organizations in Northern Ireland. The women deployed to Northern Ireland where they surveilled and hunted down terrorist leaders and facilitators using clandestine methods. On numerous occasions, the women operated with the SAS on missions to find, fix, and finish their terrorist targets.

### **Part 1: Analysis of Research**

The SOF Truths are more than a motto in USSOCOM. They instill a common emphasis on the value of human capital to the organization, which is necessary to ensure national leaders have dependable options to counter irregular threats. SOF employs individuals in teams for optimum advantage in a range of tactical and strategic scenarios, which can be broken down into surgical strike or special warfare mission areas. In surgical strike, if a female candidate aspires to become an assaulter, then her gender is not a factor, she would have to meet the standards of assessment and selection, and employed like any other operator. The requirements of surgical strike selection, as they currently exist, suggest this will rarely if ever be the case. Culturally, female operators may have a difficult time integrating into the culture of surgical strike units. However, female operators in surgical strike missions have a number of potential benefits. Assault teams could employ SOF females during battlefield interrogation, advanced force operations, and preparation of



the environment for future operations. In the special warfare mission area, based on the previous chapters, female operator appear to have a much higher likelihood of passing through selection, being accepted into team and organizational culture, and conducting operations in a highly effective manner. Indeed, in some special warfare missions, based on the requirement for access and influence over time, female operators may prove critical to their success.

The SOF Service Component Chiefs and the Commander, USSOCOM, will report to Congress in late 2015 with their final recommendations regarding women serving in the SOF. This thesis offers analysis and evidence for those leaders to consider during their deliberations. In order to assist such leaders, this thesis identifies several risk and benefit areas for consideration along with several findings and recommendations.

## **Part 2: Risks of Women in SOF**

### **Risk to Capabilities**

With the inclusion of women into SOF, current SOF operators question the necessity for women onto the teams. Many current SOF question the physical and mental capabilities fear they will become liabilities on the battlefield.<sup>1</sup> If the SOF mission and role is so critical in securing the strategic national interests of the United States, then why change the standards when SOF operations have been so successful over the past dozen years? Even when operators agree that might improve the capabilities of SOF, they are adamant that the selection process should remain unchanged. A decrease in standards, in their eyes, equals a decrease in the operator's capabilities, which could lead to future mission failure, as a team is only as strong as its weakest link.

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<sup>1</sup> Baldor, Lolita, C. "Special Ops Troops Doubt Women can do the Job." *The San Francisco Chronicle*. 5 April 2015. <http://www.sfgate.com/news/politics/article/AP-Exclusive-Special-ops-troops-doubt-women-can-6178815.php>.

Current training standards must remain in place, they suggest, and running the risk of mission failure in combat is unacceptable. As an example, such operators might cite the failure of a candidate climbing a rope ladder in a controlled training environment directly equates to an operator not climbing a rope ladder during an exfiltration from a helicopter-landing zone. Although it is difficult at this stage to determine what decision USSOCOM might render on the subject, the USSOCOM Commander, General Joseph Votel, has publically stated, “We will continue in our commitment to provide the best manned, trained, and equipped special operations personnel to execute our nation’s most difficult and sensitive missions...with that in mind, we can assure you that our high standards (the operators) will not be lowered.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Risk to Selection**

As mentioned above, current SOF members fear female operators will come at the price of diluted selection standards, and therefore, lower quality SOF operators. In the current selection process, less than one-third of candidates pass selection. More to the point, as currently demonstrated in the Ranger Training Assessment Course and Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course (IOC),<sup>3</sup> the elimination percentages for women were much higher than men.<sup>4</sup> The SOF Service Component

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<sup>2</sup> Wong, Kristina. “Special Ops Forces Fear Standards will be Lowered for Women.” *The Hill*. 6 April 2015. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/policy-strategy/237961-special-operations-forces-fear-standards-will-be-lowered-for-women>.

<sup>3</sup> Tan, Michelle. “LT Passes pre-Ranger; 6 Women now set for Ranger School.” *Army Times*. 24 February 2015. <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/02/24/ranger-school-women-army/23930153>. During the January 2015 Ranger Training Assessment Course, 58 soldiers out of 122 (male and female) completed the course. The pass rate was 55% for men, and 19% for women.

<sup>4</sup> Seck, Hope Hodge. “Last IOC in Marine Infantry Experiment Drops Female Officers.” *Marine Corps Times*. 7 April 2015. <http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/04/07/last-ioc-in-marine-experiment-drops-two-officers/25418867>. Although not SOF selection, the USMC IOC is a rigorous course that has implemented gender integration for two and a half years with 29 females attempting the course. The enlisted infantry course had 240 females attempt the course in 2014, with a 44% pass rate. The USMC officially closed IOC program to women on 6 April 2015.

Commands are currently analyzing their SOF selection processes to review and validate their current standards and to see if some can become gender-neutral.<sup>5</sup> The transformation of standards into gender-neutral ones may not necessarily make them easier. In some instances, such standards may actually become harder.<sup>6</sup> Gender-neutral standards enforces a metric into which makes it the lowest “no-fail” standard.<sup>7</sup> The risk of changing selection is not about the standards *per se*, but rather reflects the threat such changes pose to team and organizational identity and culture.

### **Risk to Culture**

Any change in selection will directly affect team and organizational identity. If women enter as operators into storied SOF units, with long histories and established artifacts and practices, the culture will shift. The subcultures of the teams are not set in stone; they will and must adapt to female integration eventually. Certain teams have a natural chemistry between individuals that is extremely difficult even for the newest SOF member to break into and women will have an even higher hurdle than the men do. Much of this culture is a reflection of, and acts as a degree of insulation to, the environments in which small teams of SOF operate. Lieutenant General Bennet Sacolick, for example, explains the nature of the demanding missions requiring forces to “operate in

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<sup>5</sup> Baldor, “Special Ops Troops Doubt Women can do the Job.” 5 April 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Baumgartner, Dr. Neal, HAF Physiologist. Interviewed by author, 12 December 2014. Dr. Baumgartner states that the incorporation of operationally relevant gender-neutral entrance exam for SOF candidates actually makes the test harder. Instead of the standard PT test consisting of sit-ups, push-ups, pull-ups, and a 1.5 mile run, a gender-neutral circuit of physical assessments, a true test that evaluates operationally relevant physical duress, is a better predictor of job performance.

<sup>7</sup> The gender-neutral standard is the lowest “allowable” standard regardless of gender. Climbing a rope ladder into a live helicopter is a “no-fail” mission; i.e. the operator must perform this task in order to exfiltrate from a helicopter-landing zone. Pull-ups alone can be measured for quality and quantity, but they cannot measure a candidate’s ability to climb a rope ladder. Therefore, climbing a rope ladder as an assessment during training is a gender-neutral exercise.

small, self-contained teams, many of which are in austere, geographically separated environments for extended periods of time.”<sup>8</sup> The social impact of adding women to a small team has the potential to disturb the necessary team cohesion that SOF teams value.

### **Risk of Capture**

Private First Class (PFC) Jessica Lynch became a media sensation as one of the first uniformed American female prisoner of war. Skeptics of female operators suggest that the US will react, or overreact, to another female POW particularly if she is a special operator. The skeptics suggest that captors will likely abuse and mistreat female operators worse than PFC Lynch. As evidence, they point to the horrific treatment the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has inflicted on its prisoners for propaganda purposes. While such concerns can and should be considered, the question of gender regarding a captured SOF operator is irrelevant. All SOF operators receive comprehensive Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training as one of their stressors during the selection process. The last SOF operator captured in combat was in 1993, in Mogadishu, Somalia.<sup>9</sup> That SOF warrior, Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant, relied on his SERE training and the confidence that the United States would stop at nothing for his return. Any future female SOF operator taken prisoner will use her training and the Code of Conduct as a necessary means to resist forms of interrogation. She will do so safe in the knowledge that the United States Government will use all means necessary to rescue, return, and reintegrate her.

### **The Ability to Kill**

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<sup>8</sup> Baldor, “Special Ops Troops Doubt Women can do the Job.” 5 April 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Durant, Michael J. and Steven Hartov, *In the Company of Heroes*. New York, NY: New American Library, 2003. Somali warlords held CW3 Michael Durant captive for eleven days after his MH-60 was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade during Operation GOTHIC SERPENT.

SOF training in advanced weapons and tactics become second nature as a means to kill the enemy and defend themselves during conflict. In 2005, US Army Sergeant Leann Hester received the Silver Star for convoy security actions in Iraq in the face of the enemy in 2005. She used her training and pure instinct to kill the enemy and protect her own troops, and thus deserved and recognized for her actions. Although all SOF will acquire these skillsets, the surgical strike operators will have the offensive-mindset engrained into their muscle memory as they conduct more raids and direct action missions than their special warfare counterparts do. Advanced training can teach women to place breaching charges, set security positions, survey helicopter and landing zones, and become a proficient CQB shooter with time and repetitive training. The objective during such training is how to make the woman offensively minded in combat situations. She will become an offensive weapon, trained to hunt and close with the enemy, including engaging in face-to-face combat. Such considerations are completely different from woman engaged in combat on a ship, a tank, or a fighter aircraft. Ground combat is personal, and with SOF operators especially so, and a female operator must accept the reality of exposure to combat when she volunteers for SOF.

### **Risk to the SOF Female: Sexual Assault**

No programs are 100% foolproof and although SOF leaders push zero tolerance for sexual harassment, it still occurs, even in USSOCOM. Adding women to the teams will change the chemistry and the cohesion of the team; it remains to be seen how. Men on the teams bond through combat, shared experiences, difficulty, and commonalities. Mentioned in Chapter 6, Jackie George deployed to a 14 IC Detachment in Northern Ireland where the climate of the team was caustic toward female operators. Some of the male operators verbally and visibly made it

known that they hated working with any females.<sup>10</sup> Adding a woman to a team on a six-month rotation, isolated geographically in austere locations, can lead to unprofessional relationships. A July 2014 RAND study on female integration into SOF suggested there were concerns that sexual harassment or assault could increase, and cited worries about “unequal treatment” of special operations candidates and personnel.<sup>11</sup> Proper leadership and a constant reminder of each of the Service’s Core Values and regulations should assist in reducing, but not eliminating sexual assaults. The US Army is already educating its SOF to more sexual assault prevention courses in advance of possible female SOF integration.<sup>12</sup>

### **Harm to the Women during Selection**

SOF selection in all of the Services is indeed a rite of passage. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, SOF selection subjects the candidates’ bodies to weeks of physical punishment and exhaustion. No study the author is aware of identifies or addresses the potential long-term effects of SOF selection on women. SOF selection is a prolonged series of physical events with the standards increasing weekly as the candidates’ bodies break down. In other words, selection is a prolonged test of physical survival and determination. If the recent experience of the US Marine Corps is any indication, leaving current SOF selection processes intact may have politically unacceptable outcomes. The Marine Corps has recently shutdown its Infantry Officer’s Course assessment program for women because none of them met the standards. The female applicants were initially in excellent shape, but the rigors of the course

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<sup>10</sup> George, Jackie and Susan Ottaway, *She Who Dared: Covert Operations in Northern Ireland with the SAS*. South Yorkshire, UK: Leo Cooper Publishing, 1999, 109.

<sup>11</sup> Baldor, “Special Ops Troops Doubt Women can do the Job.” 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Tice, Jim. “Heavy Dose of SHARP Training Planned for Special Forces.” *Army Times*. 6 April 2015. <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/04/06/women-special-operations-sharp/70486122>.



broke the candidates down physically to the point of course failure.<sup>13</sup> Deployments and sustained combat are no different. SOF operators do not get stronger and gain more endurance during combat deployments, but rather they are psychologically inclined to endure.

### **Part 3: Benefits of Women in SOF**

#### **Gain in Diversification**

Women bring a different dynamic to group settings and diversify the planning and coordination of group tasks. As SOF tend to think outside of the scope of conventional thinking and processes, women would fit in rather well in these organizations. In SOF, sometimes the simplest answer and the shortest routes, as opposed to the textbook or doctrinal solution, prove to be the right ones. Women will tend to bring different solutions to planning and execution, varying the options and thinking “outside of the box” even some male SOF operators are trapped within, and therefore female SOF might assist the group in choosing the right decision. Women perceive and approach things differently, and would disrupt the groupthink established by the team.<sup>14</sup> In Chapter 6, Sarah Ford’s ability to propose that she could handle a surveillance mission alone and operate successfully, further reinforces the notion that diversity and questioning procedures can erode the groupthink of a team.

#### **Gain in Access to Location and Personnel**

Since 2001, the United States has been in conflict in Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and in Africa. In all of these countries and variety

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<sup>13</sup> Seck, Hope Hodge. “Last IOC in Marine Infantry Experiment Drops Female Officers.” *Marine Corps Times*. 7 April 2015. <http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/04/07/last-ioc-in-marine-experiment-drops-two-officers/25418867>.

<sup>14</sup> Harrell, Margaret C., Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Jennifer Sloan, Clifford M. Graf II, Christopher J. McKelvey, and Jerry M. Sollinger. *Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999. In this study, it depicts around a 90% average across the SOF communities that the teams are predominantly Caucasian males.



of cultures, male SOF operators dealt almost exclusively with the local male populations, connecting with them as warriors. As a valuable resource and critical source of information, the indigenous female population was overlooked until the creation of the FET and CST. Given that the future of SOF operations appears to be heading towards more special warfare activities to identify conflicts early and prevent them from expanding, and as SOF perform a valuable role in long-term operations designed to build partner relations with numerous countries, a female SOF operator could assist in cementing those relationships with the female populace of that country. As Chapters 5 & 6 made clear, female operators of the OSS, SOE, and 14 IC were able to gain access to certain hostile areas by exploiting the qualities of their gender. Women could operate freely in their respective environments precisely because their enemies overlooked them as a threat and underestimated their capabilities.

### **Gain in Operator Manning**

Other nations have opened up SOF opportunities for women claiming that it increases the availability pool for potential candidates. The various units that now comprise the Canadian Special Operations Command (CANSOFCOM) lifted their restrictions for women in the late 1980s. Despite opening up their selection processes to women, and the reengineering of selection with gender-neutral standards, the CANSOF still do not have an overwhelming number of females in their ranks.<sup>15</sup> The opportunity for women to assess for SOF will open up a much larger pool of potential candidates, but it will not solve the perpetual manpower shortages that SOF organizations face.

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<sup>15</sup> Canadian Special Forces Command Website. Government of Canada. 1 October, 2014. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-special-forces/index.page>.

## Part 4: COAs

Based on the preceding chapters and a review of the potential risks and benefits of integrating female operators into SOF, this thesis offers four potential courses of action (COAs) that USSOCOM can provide to Congress in 2015. The COAs are: maintain the current selection standards; make selection standards gender-neutral; utilize its “veto” to defer or reject the integration of female operators into SOF based on USSOCOM priorities; and, create a joint SOF selection program that creates a new organization to capture the capabilities gap from all of the services.

COA 1 is to maintain the standards of each of the SOF Services Component’s respective SOF selection program and see how women fare. As of 21 April 2015, there are currently eight females attempting to pass through US Army Ranger School.<sup>16</sup> This program regularly experiences a 50-60% elimination rate due to the severity of food and sleep deprivation for over two months. By maintaining the rigorous standards of selection, USSOCOM would maintain the culture and the identity of the organization that has taken decades to establish. Rangers will hold the women who eventually pass Ranger School in the highest regards as they have passed through time-honored traditions and processes on an equal playing field.<sup>17</sup> The true value of a rigorous selection program, as Chapter 3 made clear, is that successful completion represents a significant achievement that develops a common trust among operators. For example, any Navy SEAL can be sure that every other SEAL has proved his worth in the water if they wear the famed trident badge.<sup>18</sup> Any

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<sup>16</sup> Tan, Michelle. “Female Soldiers Cut Off Hair to meet Ranger School Standards.” *Army Times*. 25 April 2015. <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/04/24/women-ranger-school-haircuts/26265435>.

<sup>17</sup> Tan, “Female Soldiers Cut Off Hair to meet Ranger School Standards.” 25 April 2015. Ranger School maintained all of its standards for the first-ever April 2015 female-integrated course.

<sup>18</sup> Simons, Anna. *The Evolution of the SOF Soldier: An Anthropological Perspective*. Excerpt taken from Horn, Bernd and J. Paul de B. Taillon, and David Last. *Force of*

modification to reduce a standard a Basic Underwater Demolition School (BUD/S) can have negative cascading effects on those who graduate the program at reduced standards. A possible way to mitigate a high elimination rate is to introduce a joint initial familiarization (IFAM) course that prepares the women prior to attending their respective Service SOF selection program. IFAM prepares the candidates physically and mentally before entering a selection program.<sup>19</sup>

COA 2 accepts women are unlikely to pass SOF selection and suggests standards should be revised to make them gender-neutral. As addressed in Chapter 6 (14 IC), organizations establishing gender-neutral standards do not necessarily make selection any easier; rather, it is the baseline physical requirement to get the job done. The most challenging aspect of this COA is the collective “buy in” for the current generation of SOF operators, and in particular, the perception created around forming new standards.<sup>20</sup> SOF operators are likely to reject changes to the selection process, no matter if they are useful or necessary, if such changes are seen to result from external pressure from or social experimentation by policymakers. Put simply, operators are likely to resist changes on a system they currently see as unbroken.

The reaction of changing the standard of a SOF selection program for policy reasons can have undesirable long-term consequences. The identity of the organization is shattered, as its traditional selection program is replaced, may have unintended consequences in pursuit of

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*Choice: Perspectives on Special Operations*. Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Naval Special Warfare Prep: Training. <http://www.sealswcc.com/navy-seals-naval-special-warfare-prep-school.html#>. The Navy SEALs implemented their version of IFAM in 2006 with great results. The goal of Naval Special Warfare Prep is simple, improve the candidates’ physical readiness for the rigorous activity they will face at Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) which last for 6 months.

<sup>20</sup> Perception of standards is critical to unit identity. Example, if all eight female Ranger candidates self-eliminate, and leadership forces the Ranger Training Battalion to change the standards to become gender-neutral, it could have devastating effects on the Ranger identity and culture should a much higher-percentage of men and women pass the next course.

equal opportunity. The authors of a RAND report studying minority participation in SOF almost decades ago found that many participants were adamantly against lowering of the standards just to achieve greater diversity. The greatest criticism came not from contemporary SOF operators but rather prospective minority candidates. Those candidates voiced strong opposition to the policies as it created an atmosphere where all minorities would be perceived as substandard.<sup>21</sup> In other words, in trying to “level the playing field” such policies instead only widened the minority divide.

COA 3, the “veto” option, would deny women the option to serve in SOF units based on a recommendation from General Votel. In late 2015, General Votel must present his recommendation on whether or not to integrate female operators into SOF to Congress. The progression and equality cycle found in Chapter 2 of legal authority, operational necessity, social acceptance and political will can be reduced to a trinity. By removing the political will (already established by the rescinding of the DCAR in 2013), USSOCOM must balance the legal authority, the social acceptance, and the operational necessity. If the operational necessity of the battlefield does not present itself for the use of women, then the social acceptance and legal authority will not justify the use of female operators. However, the option to not recommend female integration into SOF could fuel Congressional pressures with negative consequences.

The final option, COA 4, is for USSOCOM to recommend the SOF Service Components create either a new occupational series or new SOF units that make the best use of female SOF operators. Following the example of the OSS, SOE, and 14 IC, such new units would be created

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<sup>21</sup> Harrell, Kirby, Sloan, Graf, McKelvey, and Sollinger. *Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces*, 1999. xix.

fill an operational need based on the current realities of conflicts today in which SOF is involved. The creation of a new unit (possible joint organization with a pool of qualified female SOF from various services), or units, presents a number of opportunities for USSOCOM. First, USSOCOM can organize, train, and equip an operational SOF unit based on unique mission requirements, tailored to the current fight while anticipating future threats. Second, but related to the first, current and future operational requirements can dictate the standards of selection without having to modify or make gender-neutral standards within existing processes. This opportunity overcomes perhaps the most important barrier to the acceptance of female SOF operators, culture. Given that new units have no existing heritage or traditions, they would create their own and, in the process, develop their own unique culture. Finally, a new unit, based on current operational requirements, would expand the portfolio of SOF capabilities. Although operators within other SOF units might view it with suspicion, a new SOF unit might add to the healthy competition between units without threatening the culture of any one established unit.

Regardless of which COA is selected, barring the third, the author recommends the establishment of a joint IFAM (Initial Familiarization) program based on his experience as part of a SOF training cadre. This IFAM, fielded with an initial cadre of diverse (from all services) SOF operators and female observers, would develop the standards for selection. In COA 1, selection programs maintain their standards, and therefore IFAM would give potential female candidates a two-month preparatory course on what to expect before attending selection. This program, currently used by some organizations, increases the number of graduates due to reduced injuries experienced by candidates throughout

selection.<sup>22</sup> In COA 4, IFAM would in fact become the new selection school for the new organization or unit. This unit, much like 14 IC, would provide a new capability to USSOCOM in terms of female operators possessing a range of special operations skills to various teams, but with the added benefit of gaining access to locales and indigenous forces—the “human domain” so important to SOF—not in spite of, but rather because of her gender.

## **Part 5: Final Comments**

The placement of women in the special warfare mission area makes a great deal of operational sense. From a political standpoint, the United States attempts to lead the globe in gender equality and provides aid to those countries whose leaders embrace similar values, or interests, to our own. The argument for women in special warfare suggests such operators on an ODA would provide the greatest impact to UW, FID, SFA, and stability operations as her presence and actions would open up access to the female population of the host-nation. Once the Marine Corps and the Army saw the benefits of the FET and CST women in COIN operations during OIF and OEF, its leaders embraced recruiting women due to the access they gained, and information they gathered. Imagine the capability an ODA brings to a village if they have a female SF member who understands UW, FID, the culture, and the language. In ten years, the paradigm may even change and SOF will begin actively recruiting women into the special warfare realm.

In today’s culture, it is not just about gender equality and social change; it needs to be about the operational necessity and social

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<sup>22</sup> Baumgartner, Dr. Neal, HAF Physiologist. Interviewed by author, 12 December 2014. Like the Naval Special Warfare Prep Course at Great Lakes Training Facility, other units use prep course such as Pre-Scuba to give the operator an advantage of both physical and mental reinforcement before arriving to the official course.

acceptance. USSOCOM needs to decide if the rewards outweigh the risks of female SOF operators, determine what standards to keep SOF selection rigorous and specialized, and move ahead with implementation for female operator employment. Perhaps as its leaders do they should keep in mind some sage words from the past. During his retirement from the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1984, General John W. Vessey, Jr., said, “The greatest change that has come about in the United States Forces in the time I’ve been in the military service has been the extensive use of women...That is even greater than nuclear weapons, I feel, as far as our own forces are concerned.”<sup>23</sup>



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<sup>23</sup> Stiehm, Judith Hicks., *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989, 235.



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